THE CANTERBURY TALES OF CHAUCER.

To which are added,

An ESSAY upon his LANGUAGE and VERSIFICATION; an INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE; and NOTES.

VOL. II.

LONDON,
Printed for T. PAYNE, at the Mews-gate.
MDCCLXXV.

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THE CANTERBURY TALES.

THE CLERKES PROLOGUE.

SIRE Clerk of Oxenforde, our hoſte ſaid,
Ye ride as ſtille and coy, as doth a maid,
Were newe ſpouſed, ſitting at the bord:
This day ne herd I of your tonge a word.
I trow ye ſtudie abouten ſom ſophime:
But Salomon ſaith, that every thing hath time.
For Goddes ſake as beth of better chere,
It is no time for to ſtudien here.
Tell us ſom mery tale by your fay;
For what man that is entred in a play,
He nedes moſt unto the play aſſent.
But precheth not, as freres don in Lent,
To make us for our olde ſinnes wepe,
Ne that thy tale make us not to ſlepe.
Tell us ſom mery thing of aventures,
Your termes, your coloures, and your figures,
Kepe hem in ſtore, til ſo be ye endite
Hie ſtile, as whan that men to kinges write.
Speketh ſo plain at this time, I you pray,
That we may underſtonden what ye ſay.
This worthy Clerk benignely anſwerde;
Hoſte, quod he, I am under your yerde,

Ye have of us as now the governance,
And therfore wolde I do you obeyſance,
As fer as reſon aſketh hardely:
I wol you tell a tale, which that I
Lerned at Padowe, of a worthy clerk,
As preved by his wordes and his werk.
He is now ded, and nailed in his cheſte,
I pray to God ſo yeve his ſoule reſte.
Fraunceis Petrark, the laureat poete,
Highte this clerk, whos rethorike ſwete
Enlumined all Itaille of poetrie,
As Lynyan did of philoſophie,
Or law, or other art particulere:
But deth, that wol not ſuffre us dwellen here,
But as it were a twinkling of an eye,
Hem both hath ſlaine, and alle we ſhul dye.
But forth to tellen of this worthy man,
That taughte me this tale, as I began,
I ſay that firſt he with hie ſtile enditeth
(Or he the body of his tale writeth)
A proheme, in the which deſcriveth he
Piemont, and of Saluces the contree,
And ſpeketh of Apennin the hilles hie,
That ben the boundes of weſt Lumbardie:
And of mount Veſulus in ſpecial,
Wher as the Poo out of a welle ſmal

Taketh

Taketh his firſte ſpringing and his ſours,
That eſtward ay encreſeth in his cours
To Emelie ward, to Ferare, and Veniſe,
The which a longe thing were to deviſe.
And trewely, as to my jugement,
Me thinketh it a thing impertinent,
Save that he wol conveyen his matere:
But this is the tale which that ye mow here.

THE CLERKES TALE.

THER is right at the Weſt ſide of Itaille
Doun at the rote of Veſulus the cold,
A luſty plain, habundant of vitaille,
Ther many a toun and tour thou maiſt behold,
That founded were in time of fathers old,
And many another delitable ſighte,
And Saluces this noble contree highte.

A markis whilom lord was of that lond,
As were his worthy elders him before,
And obeyſant, ay redy to his hond,
Were all his lieges, bothe leſſe and more:
Thus in delit he liveth, and hath don yore,
Beloved and drad, thurgh favour of fortune,
Both of his lordes, and of his commune.

Therwith he was, to ſpeken of lineage,
The gentileſt yborne of Lumbardie,

A faire perſon, and ſtrong, and yong of age,
And ful of honour and of curteſie:
Diſcret ynough, his contree for to gie,
Sauf in ſom thinges that he was to blame,
And Walter was this yonge lordes name.

I blame him thus, that he conſidered nought
In time coming what might him betide,
But on his luſt preſent was all his thought,
And for to hauke and hunt on every ſide:
Wel neigh all other cures let he ſlide,
And eke he n'old (and that was worſt of all)
Wedden no wif for ought that might befall.

Only that point his peple bare ſo ſore,
That flockmel on a day to him they went,
And on of hem, that wiſeſt was of lore,
(Or elles that the lord wold beſt aſſent
That he ſhuld tell him what the peple ment,
Or elles coud he wel ſhew ſwiche matere)
He to the markis ſaid as ye ſhull here.

O noble markis, your humanitee
Aſſureth us and yeveth us hardineſſe,
As oft as time is of neceſſitee,
That we to you mow tell our hevineſſe:
Accepteth, lord, than of your gentilleſſe,

That

That we with pitous herte unto you plaine,
And let your eres nat my vois diſdaine.

Al have I not to don in this matere
More than another man hath in this place,
Yet for as moch as ye, my lord ſo dere,
Han alway ſhewed me favour and grace,
I dare the better aſke of you a ſpace
Of audience, to ſhewen our requeſt,
And ye, my lord, to don right as you leſt.

For certes, lord, ſo wel us liketh you
And all your werke, and ever have don, that we
Ne couden not ourſelf deviſen how
We mighten live in more felicitee:
Save o thing, lord, if it your wille be,
That for to be a wedded man you leſt,
Than were your peple in ſoverain hertes reſt.

Boweth your nekke under the blisful yok
Of ſoveraintee, and not of ſerviſe,
Which that men clepen ſpouſaile or wedlok:
And thinketh, lord, among your thoughtes wiſe,
How that our dayes paſſe in ſondry wiſe;
For though we ſlepe, or wake, or rome, or ride,
Ay fleth the time, it wol no man abide.

And though your grene youthe floure as yet,
In crepeth age alway as ſtill as ſton,
And deth manaſeth every age, and ſmit
In eche eſtat, for ther eſcapeth non;
And al ſo certain, as we knowe eche on
That we ſhul die, as uncertain we all
Ben of that day whan deth ſhal on us fall.

Accepteth than of us the trewe entent,
That never yet refuſeden your heſt,
And we wol, lord, if that ye wol aſſent,
Cheſe you a wife in ſhort time at the meſt,
Borne of the gentilleſt and of the beſt
Of all this lond, ſo that it oughte ſeme
Honour to God and you, as we can deme.

Deliver us out of all this beſy drede,
And take a wif, for highe Goddes ſake:
For if it ſo befell, as God forbede,
That thurgh your deth your linage ſhulde ſlake,
And that a ſtrange ſucceſſour ſhuld take
Your heritage, o! wo were us on live:
Wherfore we pray you haſtily to wive.

Hir meke praiere and hir pitous chere
Made the markis for to han pitee.

Ye

Ye wol, quod he, min owen peple dere,
To that I never er thought conſtrainen me.
I me rejoyced of my libertee,
That ſelden time is found in mariage;
Ther I was free, I moſte ben in ſervage.

But natheles I ſee your trewe entent,
And truſt upon your wit, and have don ay:
Wherfore of my free will I wol aſſent
To wedden me, as ſone as ever I may.
But ther as ye han profred me to-day
To cheſen me a wif, I you releſe
That chois, and pray you of that profer ceſe.

For God it wot, that children often ben
Unlike hir worthy eldres hem before,
Bountee cometh al of God, not of the ſtren,
Of which they ben ygendred and ybore:
I truſt in Goddes bountee, and therfore
My mariage, and min eſtat, and reſt
I him betake, he may don as him leſt.

Let me alone in cheſing of my wif,
That charge upon my bak I wol endure:
But I you pray, and charge upon your lif,
That what wif that I take, ye me aſſure

To worſhip hire while that hire lif may dure,
In word and werk both here and elles where,
As ſhe an emperoures doughter were,

And forthermore this ſhuln ye ſwere, that ye
Again my chois ſhul never grutch ne ſtrive,
For ſith I ſhal forgo my libertee
At your requeſt, as ever mote I thrive,
Ther as min herte is ſet, ther wol I wive:
And but ye wol aſſent in ſwiche manere,
I pray you ſpeke no more of this matere.

With hertly will they ſworen and aſſenten
To all this thing, ther ſaide not o wight nay:
Beſeching him of grace, or that they wenten,
That he wold granten hem a certain day
Of his ſpouſaile, as ſone as ever he may,
For yet alway the peple ſomwhat dred,
Leſt that this markis wolde no wif wed.

He granted hem a day, ſwiche as him leſt,
On which he wold be wedded ſikerly,
And ſaid he did all this at hir requeſt;
And they with humble herte ful buxumly
Kneling upon hir knees ful reverently
Him thonken all, and thus they han an end
Of hir entente, and home agen they wend.

And

And hereupon he to his officeres
Commandeth for the feſte to purvay.
And to his privee knightes and ſquieres
Swiche charge he yave, as him liſt on hem lay:
And they to his commandement obey,
And eche of hem doth al his diligence
To do unto the feſte al reverence.

Pars ſecunda.

Nought fer fro thilke paleis honourable,
Wher as this markis ſhope his mariage,
Ther ſtood a thorpe, of ſighte delitable,
In which that poure folk of that village
Hadden hir beſtes and hir herbergage,
And of hir labour toke hir ſuſtenance,
After that the erthe yave hem habundance.

Among this poure folk ther dwelt a man,
Which that was holden poureſt of hem all:
But highe God ſomtime ſenden can
His grace unto a litel oxes ſtall:
Janicola men of that thorpe him call.
A doughter had he, faire ynough to ſight,
And Griſildis this yonge maiden hight.

But for to ſpeke of vertuous beautee,
Than was ſhe on the faireſt under ſonne:

Ful

Ful pourely yfoſtred up was ſhe:
No likerous luſt was in hire herte yronne:
Wel ofter of the well than of the tonne
She dranke, and for ſhe wolde vertue pleſe,
She knew wel labour, but non idel eſe.

But though this mayden tendre were of age,
Yet in the breſt of hire virginitee
Ther was encloſed ſad and ripe corage:
And in gret reverence and charitee
Hire olde poure fader foſtred ſhe:
A few ſheep ſpinning on the feld ſhe kept,
She wolde not ben idel til ſhe ſlept.

And whan ſhe homward came, ſhe wolde bring
Wortes and other herbes times oft,
The which ſhe ſhred and ſethe for hire living,
And made hire bed ful hard, and nothing ſoft:
And ay ſhe kept hire fadres lif on loft
With every obeiſance and diligence,
That child may don to fadres reverence.

Upon Griſilde, this poure creature,
Ful often ſithe this markis ſette his eye,
As he on hunting rode paraventure:
And whan it fell that he might hire eſpie,

He

He not with wanton loking of folie
His eyen caſt on hire, but in ſad wiſe
Upon hire chere he wold him oft avife,

Commending in his herte hire womanhede,
And eke hire vertue, paſſing any wight
Of ſo yong age, as wel in chere as dede.
For though the peple have no gret inſight
In vertue, he conſidered ful right
Hire bountee, and diſpoſed that he wold
Wedde hire only, if ever he wedden ſhold.

The day of wedding came, but no wight can
Tellen what woman that it ſhulde be,
For which mervaille wondred many a man,
And ſaiden, whan they were in privetee,
Wol not our lord yet leve his vanitee?
Wol he not wedde? alas, alas the while!
Why wol he thus himſelf and us begile?

But natheles this markis hath do make
Of gemmes, ſette in gold and in aſure,
Broches and ringes, for Griſildes ſake,
And of hire clothing toke he the meſure
Of a maiden like unto hire ſtature,
And eke of other ornamentes all,
That unto ſwiche a wedding ſhulde fall.

The

The time of underne of the ſame day
Approcheth, that this wedding ſhulde be,
And all the paleis put was in array,
Both halle and chambres, eche in his degree,
Houſes of office ſtuffed with plentee
Ther mayſt thou ſee of deinteous vitaille,
That may be found, as fer as laſteth Itaille.

This real markis richely arraide,
Lordes and ladies in his compagnie,
The which unto the feſte weren praide,
And of his retenue the bachelerie,
With many a ſoun of ſondry melodie,
Unto the village, of the which I told,
In this array the righte way they hold.

Griſilde of this (God wot) ful innocent,
That for hire ſhapen was all this array,
To fetchen water at a welle is went,
And cometh home as ſone as ever ſhe may.
For wel ſhe had herd ſay, that thilke day
The markis ſhulde wedde, and if ſhe might,
She wolde fayn han ſeen ſom of that ſight.

She thought I wol with other maidens ſtond,
That ben my felawes, in our dore and ſee

The markiſeſſe, and therto wol I fond
To don at home, as ſone as it may be,
The labour which that longeth unto me,
And than I may at leiſer hire behold,
If ſhe this way unto the caſtel hold.

And as ſhe wolde over the threſwold gon,
The markis came and gan hire for to call,
And ſhe ſet doun hire water-pot anon
Beſide the threſwold in an oxes ſtall,
And doun upon hire knees ſhe gan to fall,
And with ſad countenance kneleth ſtill,
Til ſhe had herd what was the lordes will.

This thoughtful markis ſpake unto this maid
Ful ſoberly, and ſaid in this manere:
Wher is your fader, Griſildis? he ſaid.
And ſhe with reverence in humble chere
Anſwered, lord, he is al redy here.
And in ſhe goth withouten lenger lette,
And to the markis ſhe hire fader fette.

He by the hond than toke this poure man,
And ſaide thus, whan he him had aſide:
Janicola, I neither may ne can
Lenger the pleſance of min herte hide,
If that thou voucheſauf, what ſo betide

Thy

Thy doughter wol I take or that I wend
As for my wif, unto hire lives end.

Thou lovest me, that wot I wel certain,
And art my faithful hegeman ybore,
And all that liketh me, I dare wel sain
It liketh thee, and specially therfore
Tell me that point, that I have said before,
If that thou wolt unto this purpos drawe,
To taken me as for thy son in lawe.

This sodein cas this man astoned so,
That red he wex, abaist, and al quaking
He stood, unnethes said he wordes mo,
But only thus; Lord, quod he, my willing
Is as ye wol, ne ageins your liking
I wol no thing, min owen lord so dere,
Right as you list, governeth this matere.

Than wol I, quod this markis softely,
That in thy chambre, I, and thou, and she,
Have a collation, and wost thou why?
For I wol ask hire, if it hire wille be
To be my wif, and reule hire after me:
And all this shal be don in thy presence,
I wol not speke out of thin audience.

And

And in the chambre, while they were aboute
The tretee, which as ye ſhul after here,
The peple came into the hous withoute,
And wondred hem, in how honeſt manere
Ententifly ſhe kept hire fader dere:
But utterly Grifildis wonder might,
For never erſt ne ſaw ſhe ſwiche a ſight.

No wonder is though that ſhe be aſtoned,
To ſee ſo gret a geſt come in that place,
She never was to non ſwiche geſtes woned,
For which ſhe loked with ful pale face.
But ſhortly forth this matere for to chace,
Thiſe arn the wordes that the markis ſaid
To this benigne, veray, faithful maid.

Grifilde, he ſaid, ye ſhuln wel underſtond,
It liketh to your fader and to me,
That I you wedde, and eke it may ſo ſtond
As I ſuppoſe, ye wol that it ſo be:
But thiſe demaundes aſke I firſt (quod he)
That ſin it ſhal be don in haſty wiſe,
Wol ye aſſent, or elles you aviſe?

I ſay this, be ye redy with good herte
To all my luſt, and that I freely may
As me beſt thinketh do you laugh or ſmerte,

And

And never ye to grutchen, night ne day,
And eke whan I ſay ya, ye ſay not nay,
Neither by word, ne frouning countenance?
Swere this, and here I ſwere our alliance.

Wondring upon this thing, quaking for drede,
She ſaide; Lord, indigne and unworthy
Am I, to thilke honour, that ye me bede,
But as ye wol yourſelf, right ſo wol I:
And here I ſwere, that never willingly
In werk, ne thought, I n'ill you diſobeie
For to be ded, though me were loth to deie.

This is ynough, Griſilde min, quod he.
And forth he goth with a ful ſobre chere,
Out at the dore, and after than came ſhe,
And to the peple he ſaid in this manere:
This is my wif, quod he, that ſtondeth here.
Honoureth her, and loveth hire, I pray,
Who ſo me loveth, ther n'is no more to ſay.

And for that nothing of hire olde gere
She ſhulde bring into his hous, he bad
That women ſhuld deſpoilen hire right there,
Of which thiſe ladies weren nothing glad
To handle hire clothes wherin ſhe was clad:

But

But natheles this maiden bright of hew
Fro foot to hed they clothed han all new.

Hire heres han they kempt, that lay untreſſed
Ful rudely, and with hir fingres ſmal
A coroune on hire hed they han ydreſſed,
And ſette hire ful of nouches gret and ſmal:
Of hire array what ſhuld I make a tale?
Unneth the peple hire knew for hire fairneſſe,
Whan ſhe tranſmewed was in ſwiche richeſſe.

This markis hath hire ſpouſed with a ring
Brought for the ſame cauſe, and than hire ſette
Upon an hors ſnow-white, and wel ambling,
And to his paleis, or he lenger lette,
(With joyful peple, that hire lad and mette)
Conveyed hire, and thus the day they ſpende
In revel, til the ſonne gan deſcende.

And ſhortly forth this tale for to chace,
I ſay, that to this newe markiſeſſe
God hath ſwiche favour ſent hire of his grace,
That it ne ſemeth not by likelineſſe
That ſhe was borne and fed in rudeneſſe,
As in a cote, or in an oxes ſtall,
But nouriſhed in an emperoures hall.

To every wight ſhe waxen is ſo dere,
And worſhipful, that folk ther ſhe was bore,
And fro hire birthe knew hire yere by yere,
Unnethes trowed they, but dorſt han ſwore,
That to Janicle, of which I ſpake before,
She doughter n'as, for as by conjecture
Hem thoughte ſhe was another creature.

For though that ever vertuous was ſhe,
She was encreſed in ſwiche excellence
Of thewes good, yſet in high bountee,
And ſo diſcrete, and faire of eloquence,
So benigne, and ſo digne of reverence,
And coude ſo the peples herte enbrace,
That eche hire loveth that loketh on hire face.

Not only of Saluces in the toun
Publiſhed was the bountee of hire name,
But eke beſide in many a regioun,
If on ſaith wel, another ſaith the ſame:
So ſpredeth of hire hie bountee the fame,
That men and women, yong as wel as old,
Gon to Saluces upon hire to behold.

Thus Walter lowly, nay but really,
Wedded with fortunat honeſtetee,
In Goddes pees liveth ful eſily

At

At home, and grace ynough outward had he:
And for he ſaw that under low degree
Was honeſt vertue hid, the peple him held
A prudent man, and that is ſeen ful ſeld.

Not only this Griſildis thurgh hire wit
Coude all the fete of wifly homlineſſe,
But eke whan that the cas required it,
The comune profit coude ſhe redreſſe:
Ther n'as diſcord, rancour, ne hevineſſe
In all the lond, that ſhe ne coude appeſe,
And wiſely bring hem all in hertes eſe.

Though that hire huſbond abſent were or non,
If gentilmen, or other of that contree
Were wroth, ſhe wolde bringen hem at on,
So wiſe and ripe wordes hadde ſhe,
And jugement of ſo gret equitee,
That ſhe from heven ſent was, as men wend,
Peple to ſave, and every wrong to amend.

Not longe time after that this Griſilde
Was wedded, ſhe a doughter hath ybore,
All had hire lever han borne a knave childe:
Glad was the markis and his folk therfore,
For though a maiden childe come all before,

She may unto a knave child atteine
By likelyhed, ſin ſhe n'is not barreine.

Pars tertia.

Ther fell, as it befalleth times mo,
Whan that this childe had ſouked but a throwe,
This markis in his herte longed ſo
To tempt his wif, hire ſadneſſe for to knowe,
That he ne might out of his herte throwe
This marveillous deſir his wif to aſſay,
Needles, God wot, he thought hire to affray.

He had aſſaied hire ynough before,
And found hire ever good, what nedeth it
Hire for to tempt, and alway more and more?
Though ſom men praiſe it for a ſubtil wit,
But as for me, I ſay that evil it ſit
To aſſay a wif whan that it is no nede,
And putten hire in anguiſh and in drede.

For which this markis wrought in this manere;
He came a-night alone ther as ſhe lay
With ſterne face, and with ful trouble chere,
And ſayde thus; Griſilde, (quod he) that day
That I you toke out of your poure array,
And put you in eſtat of high nobleſſe,
Ye han it not forgetten, as I geſſe.

I ſay,

I ſay, Griſilde, this preſent dignitee,
In which that I have put you, as I trow,
Maketh you not forgetful for to be
That I you toke in poure eſtat ful low,
For ony wele ye mote yourſelven know.
Take hede of every word that I you ſay,
Ther is no wight that hereth it but we tway.

Ye wote yourſelf wel how that ye came here
Into this hous, it is not long ago,
And though to me ye be right lefe and dere,
Unto my gentils ye be nothing ſo:
They ſay, to hem it is gret ſhame and wo
For to be ſuggetes, and ben in ſervage
To thee, that borne art of a ſmal linage.

And namely ſin thy doughter was ybore,
Thiſe wordes han they ſpoken douteles,
But I deſire, as I have don before,
To live my lif with hem in reſt and pees:
I may not in this cas be reccheles;
I mote do with thy doughter for the beſt,
Not as I wold, but as my gentils left.

And yet, God wote, this is ful loth to me:
But natheles withouten youre weting

I wol nought do, but thus wol I (quod he)
That ye to me aſſenten in this thing.
Shew now youre patience in youre werking,
That ye me hight and ſwore in youre village
The day that maked was our mariage.

Whan ſhe had herd all this, ſhe not ameved
Neyther in word, in chere, ne countenance,
(For as it ſemed, ſhe was not agreved)
She ſayde; Lord, all lith in your pleſance,
My child and I, with hertely obeiſance
Ben youres all, and ye may ſave or ſpill,
Your owen thing: werketh after your will.

Ther may no thing, ſo God my ſoule ſave,
Like unto you, that may diſpleſen me:
Ne I deſire nothing for to have,
Ne drede for to leſe, ſauf only ye:
This will is in myn herte, and ay ſhal be,
No length of time, or deth may this deface,
Ne change my corage to an other place.

Glad was this markis for hire anſwering,
But yet he feined as he were not ſo,
Al drery was his chere and his loking,
Whan that he ſhuld out of the chambre go.
Sone after this, a furlong way or two,

He

He prively hath told all his entent
Unto a man, and to his wif him ſent.

A maner ſergeant was this prive man,
The which he faithful often founden had
In thinges gret, and eke ſwiche folk wel can
Don execution on thinges bad:
The lord knew wel, that he him loved and drad.
And whan this ſergeant wiſt his lordes will,
Into the chambre he ſtalked him ful ſtill.

Madame, he ſayd, ye mote foryeve it me,
Though I do thing, to which I am conſtreined;
Ye ben ſo wiſe, that right wel knowen ye,
That lordes heſtes may not ben yfeined,
They may wel be bewailed and complained,
But men mote nedes to hir luſt obey,
And ſo wol I, ther n'is no more to ſay.

This child I am commanded for to take.
And ſpake no more, but out the child he hent
Deſpitouſly, and gan a chere to make,
As though he wold have ſlain it, or he went.
Griſildis moſt al ſuffer and al conſent:
And as a lambe, ſhe ſitteth meke and ſtill,
And let this cruel ſergeant do his will.

Suſpecious was the diffame of this man,
Suſpect his face, ſuſpect his word alſo,
Suſpect the time in which he this began:
Alas! hire doughter, that ſhe loved ſo,
She wende he wold han ſlaien it right tho,
But natheles ſhe neither wept ne ſiked,
Conforming hire to that the markis liked.

But at the laſt to ſpeken ſhe began,
And mekely ſhe to the ſergeant praid
(So as he was a worthy gentil man)
That ſhe might kiſſe hire child, or that it deid:
And in hire barme this litel child ſhe leid,
With ful ſad face, and gan the child to bliſſe,
And lulled it, and after gan it kiſſe.

And thus ſhe ſayd in hire benigne vois:
Farewel, my child, I ſhal thee never ſee,
But ſin I have thee marked with the crois,
Of thilke fader ybleſſed mote thou be,
That for us died upon a crois of tree:
Thy ſoule, litel child, I him betake,
For this night ſhalt thou dien for my ſake.

I trow that to a norice in this cas
It had ben hard this routhe for to ſee:

Wel

Wel might a moder than han cried alas,
But natheles ſo ſad ſtedfaſt was ſhe,
That ſhe endured all adverſitee,
And to the ſergeant mekely ſhe ſayde,
Have here agen your litel yonge mayde.

Goth now (quod ſhe) and doth my lordes heſt:
And o thing wold I pray you of your grace,
But if my lord forbade you at the leſt,
Burieth this litel body in ſom place,
That beſtes ne no briddes it to-race.
But he no word to that purpos wold ſay,
But toke the child and went upon his way.

This ſergeant came unto his lord again,
And of Griſildes wordes and hire chere
He told him point for point, in ſhort and plain,
And him preſented with his doughter dere.
Somwhat this lord hath routhe in his manere,
But natheles his purpos held he ſtill,
As lordes don, whan they wol have hir will,

And bad this ſergeant that he prively
Shulde this child ful ſofte wind and wrappe,
With alle circumſtances tendrely,
And carry it in a cofre, or in a lappe;
But upon peine his hed of for to ſwappe

That

That no man ſhulde know of his entent,
Ne whens he came, ne whider that he went;

But at Boloigne, unto his ſuſter dere,
That thilke time of Pavie was counteſſe,
He ſhuld it take, and ſhew hire this matere,
Beſeching hire to don hire beſineſſe
This child to foſtren in all gentilleſſe,
And whos child that it was he bade hire hide
From every wight, for ought that may betide.

This ſergeant goth, and hath fulfilde this thing.
But to this marquis now retorne we;
For now goth he ful faſt imagining,
If by his wives chere he mighte ſee,
Or by hire wordes apperceive, that ſhe
Were changed, but he never coud hire finde,
But ever in on ylike ſad and kinde.

As glad, as humble, as beſy in ſervice
And eke in love, as ſhe was wont to be,
Was ſhe to him, in every maner wiſe;
Ne of hire doughter not a word ſpake ſhe:
Non accident for non adverſitee
Was ſeen in hire, ne never hire doughters name
Ne nevened ſhe, for erneſt ne for game.

Pars quarta.

In this eſtat ther paſſed ben foure yere
Er ſhe with childe was, but as God wold,
A knave childe ſhe bare by this Waltere
Ful gracious, and fair for to behold:
And whan that folk it to his fader told,
Not only he, but all his contree mery
Was for this childe, and God they thonke and hery.

Whan it was two yere old, and from the breſt
Departed of his norice, on a day
This markis caughte yet another leſt
To tempte his wif yet ofter, if he may.
O! nedeles was ſhe tempted in aſſay.
But wedded men ne connen no meſure,
Whan that they finde a patient creature.

Wif, quod this markis, ye han herd or this
My peple ſikely beren our mariage,
And namely ſin my ſone yboren is,
Now is it werſe than ever in al our age:
The murmur ſleth myn herte and my corage,
For to myn eres cometh the vois ſo ſinerte,
That it wel nie deſtroyed hath myn herte.

Now

Now ſay they thus, whan Walter is agon,
Than ſhal the blood of Janicle ſuccede,
And ben our lord, for other han we non:
Swiche wordes ſayn my peple, it is no drede.
Wel ought I of ſwiche murmur taken hede,
For certainly I drede al ſwiche ſentence,
Though they not plainen in myn audience.

I wolde live in pees, if that I might:
Wherfore I am diſpoſed utterly,
As I his ſuſter ſerved er by night,
Right ſo thinke I to ſerve him prively.
This warne I you, that ye not ſodenly
Out of yourſelf for no wo ſhuld outraie,
Beth patient, and therof I you praie.

I have, quod ſhe, ſayd thus and ever ſhal,
I wol no thing, ne n'ill no thing certain,
But as you liſt: not greveth me at al,
Though that my doughter and my ſone be ſlain
At your commandement: that is to ſain,
I have not had no part of children twein,
But firſt ſikeneſſe, and after wo and peine.

Ye ben my lord, doth with your owen thing
Right as you liſt, aſketh no rede of me:

For

For as I left at home al my clothing
Whan I came firſt to you, right ſo (quod ſhe)
Left I my will and al my libertee,
And toke your clothing: wherfore I you prey,
Doth your pleſance, I wol youre luſt obey.

And certes, if I hadde preſcience
Your will to know, er ye your luſt me told,
I wold it do withouten negligence:
But now I wote your luſt, and what ye wold,
All your pleſance ferme and ſtable I hold,
For wiſt I that my deth might do you eſe,
Right gladly wold I dien, you to pleſe.

Deth may not maken no compariſoun
Unto your love: and whan this markis ſay
The conſtance of his wif, he caſt adoun
His eyen two, and wondreth how ſhe may
In patience ſuffer al this array:
And forth he goth with drery contenance,
But to his herte it was ful gret pleſance.

This ugly ſergeant in the ſame wiſe
That he hire doughter caughte, right ſo he
(Or werſe, if men can any werſe deviſe)
Hath hent hire ſone, that ful was of beautee:
And ever in on ſo patient was ſhe,

That

That ſhe no chere made of hevineſſe,
But kiſt hire ſone and after gan it bleſſe.

Save this ſhe praied him, if that he might,
Hire litel ſone he wold in erthe grave,
His tendre limmes, delicat to ſight,
Fro foules and fro beſtes for to ſave.
But ſhe non anſwer of him mighte have,
He went his way, as him no thing ne rought,
But to Boloigne he tendrely it brought.

This markis wondreth ever lenger the more
Upon hire patience, and if that he
Ne hadde ſothly knowen therbefore,
That parfitly hire children loved ſhe,
He wold han wend that of ſom ſubtiltee
And of malice, or for cruel corage,
That ſhe had ſuffred this with ſad viſage.

But wel he knew, that next himſelf, certain
She loved hire children beſt in every wiſe.
But now of women wold I aſken fayn,
If thiſe aſſaies mighten not ſuffiſe;
What coud a ſturdy huſbond more deviſe
To preve hire wifhood, and hire ſtedfaſtneſſe,
And he continuing ever in ſturdineſſe?

But

But ther ben folk of ſwiche condition,
That, whan they han a certain purpos take,
They can not ſtint of hir entention,
But, right as they were bounden to a ſtake,
They wol not of hir firſte purpos ſlake:
Right ſo this markis fully hath purpoſed
To tempt his wif, as he was firſt diſpoſed.

He waiteth, if by word or contenance
That ſhe to him was changed of corage:
But never coud he finden variance,
She was ay on in herte and in viſage,
And ay the further that ſhe was in age,
The more trewe (if that it were poſſible)
She was to him in love, and more penible.

For which it ſemed thus, that of hem two
Ther was but o will; for as Walter leſt,
The ſame luſt was hire pleſance alſo;
And God be thanked, all fell for the beſt.
She ſhewed wel, for no worldly unreſt
A wif, as of hireſelf, no thing ne ſholde
Wille in effect, but as hire huſbond wolde.

The ſclandre of Walter wonder wide ſpradde,
That of a cruel herte he wikkedly,

For

For he a poure woman wedded hadde,
Hath murdred both his children prively:
Swich murmur was among hem comunly.
No wonder is: for to the peples ere
Ther came no word, but that they murdred were.

For which ther as his peple therbefore
Had loved him wel, the ſclandre of his diffame
Made hem that they him hateden therfore:
To ben a murdrour is an hateful name.
But natheles, for erneſt ne for game,
He of his cruel purpos n'olde ſtente,
To tempt his wif was ſette all his entente.

Whan that his doughter twelf yere was of age,
He to the court of Rome, in ſubtil wiſe
Enformed of his will, ſent his meſſage,
Commanding him, ſwiche billes to deviſe,
As to his cruel purpos may ſuffiſe,
How that the pope, as for his peples reſt
Bade him to wed another, if him leſt.

I ſay he bade, they ſhulden contrefete
The popes bulles, making mention
That he hath leve his firſte wif to lete,
As by the popes diſpenſation,
To ſtinten rancour and diſſenſion

Betwix

Betwix his peple and him: thus ſpake the bull,
The which they han publiſſhed at the full.

The rude peple, as no wonder is,
Wenden ful wel, that it had ben right ſo:
But whan thiſe tidings came to Griſildis,
I deme that hire herte was ful of wo;
But ſhe ylike ſad for evermo
Diſpoſed was, this humble creature,
The adverſitee of fortune al to endure;

Abiding ever his luſt and his pleſance,
To whom that ſhe was yeven, herte and al,
As to hire veray worldly ſuffiſance.
But ſhortly if this ſtorie tell I ſhal,
This markis writen hath in ſpecial
A lettre, in which he ſheweth his entente,
And ſecretly he to Boloigne it ſente,

To the erl of Pavie, which that hadde tho
Wedded his ſuſter, prayed he ſpecially
To bringen home agein his children two
In honourable eſtat al openly:
But o thing he him prayed utterly,
That he to no wight, though men wold enquere,
Shulde not tell whos children that they were,

But ſay, the maiden ſhuld ywedded be
Unto the markis of Saluces anon.
And as this erl was prayed, ſo did he,
For at day ſette he on his way is gon
Toward Saluces, and lordes many on
In rich arraie, this maiden for to gide,
Hire yonge brother riding hire beſide.

Arraied was toward hire mariage
This freſhe maiden, ful of gemmes clere,
Hire brother, which that ſeven yere was of age,
Arraied eke ful freſh in his manere:
And thus in gret nobleſſe and with glad chere
Toward Saluces ſhaping hir journay
Fro day to day they riden in hir way.

Pars quinta.

Among al this, after his wicked uſage,
This markis yet his wif to tempten more
To the uttereſte prefe of hire corage,
Fully to have experience and lore,
If that ſhe were as ſtedefaſt as before,
He on a day in open audience
Ful boiſtouſly hath ſaid hire this ſentence:

Certes, Grifilde, I had ynough pleſance
To han you to my wif, for your goodneſſe,

And

And for your trouthe, and for your obeyſance,
Not for your linage, ne for your richeſſe,
But now know I in veray ſothfaſtneſſe,
That in gret lordſhip, if I me wel aviſe,
Ther is gret ſervitude in ſondry wiſe.

I may not don, as every ploughman may:
My peple me conſtreineth for to take
Another wif, and crien day by day;
And eke the pope rancour for to ſlake
Conſenteth it, that dare I undertake:
And trewely, thus moche I wol you ſay,
My newe wif is coming by the way.

Be ſtrong of herte, and voide anon hire place,
And thilke dower that ye broughten me
Take it agen, I grant it of my grace.
Returneth to your fadres hous, (quod he)
No man may alway have proſperitee.
With even herte I rede you to endure
The ſtroke of fortune, or of aventure.

And ſhe agen anſwerd in patience:
My lord, quod ſhe, I wote, and wiſt alway,
How that betwixen your magnificence
And my poverte no wight ne can ne may

Maken compariſon, it is no nay;
I ne held me never digne in no manere
To be your wif, ne yet your chamberere.

And in this hous, ther ye me lady made,
(The highe God take I for my witneſſe,
And all ſo wiſly he my ſoule glad)
I never held me lady ne maiſtreſſe,
But humble ſervant to your worthineſſe,
And ever ſhal, while that my lif may dure,
Aboven every worldly creature.

That ye ſo longe of your benignitee
Han holden me in honour and nobley,
Wheras I was not worthy for to be,
That thanke I God and you, to whom I prey
Foryelde it you, ther is no more to ſey:
Unto my fader gladly wol I wende,
And with him dwell unto my lives ende;

Ther I was foſtred of a childe ful ſmal,
Til I be ded my lif ther wol I lede,
A widew clene in body, herte and al.
For ſith I yave to you my maidenhede,
And am your trewe wif, it is no drede,
God ſhilde ſwiche a lordes wif to take
Another man to huſbond or to make.

And

And of your newe wif, God of his grace
So graunte you wele and proſperite:
For I wol gladly yelden hire my place,
In which that I was blisful wont to be.
For ſith it liketh you, my lord, (quod ſhe)
That whilom weren all myn hertes reſt,
That I ſhal gon, I wol go whan you leſt.

But ther as ye me profre ſwiche dowaire
As I firſt brought, it is wel in my mind,
It were my wretched clothes, nothing faire,
The which to me were hard now for to find.
O goode God! how gentil and how kind
Ye ſemed by your ſpeche and your viſage,
The day that maked was oure marriage!

But ſoth is ſaid, algate I find it trewe,
For in effect it preved is on me,
Love is not old, as whan that it is newe.
But certes, lord, for non adverſitee
To dien in this cas, it ſhal not be
That ever in word or werke I ſhal repent,
That I you yave min herte in hole entent.

My lord, ye wote, that in my fadres place
Ye dide me ſtripe out of my poure wede,

And richely ye clad me of your grace;
To you brought I nought elles out of drede,
But faith, and nakedneſſe, and maidenhede;
And here agen your clothing I reſtore,
And eke your wedding ring for evermore.

The remenant of your jeweles redy be
Within your chambre, I dare it ſafly ſain:
Naked out of my fadres hous (quod ſhe)
I came, and naked I mote turne again.
All your pleſance wolde I folwe fain:
But yet I hope it be not your entent,
That I ſmokles out of your paleis went.

Ye coude not do ſo diſhoneſt a thing,
That thilke wombe, in which your children lay,
Shulde before the peple, in my walking,
Be ſeen al bare: wherfore I you pray
Let me not like a worme go by the way:
Remembre you, min owen lord ſo dere,
I was your wif, though I unworthy were.

Wherfore in guerdon of my maidenhede,
Which that I brought and not agen I bere,
As voucheſauf to yeve me to my mede
But ſwiche a ſmok as I was wont to were,
That I therwith may wrie the wombe of hire

That

That was your wif: and here I take my leve
Of you, min owen lord, leſt I you greve.

The ſmok, quod he, that thou haſt on thy bake,
Let it be ſtill, and bere it forth with thee.
But wel unnethes thilke word he ſpake,
But went his way for routhe and for pitee.
Before the folk hireſelven ſtripeth ſhe,
And in hire ſmok, with foot and hed al bare,
Toward hire fadres hous forth is ſhe fare.

The folk hire folwen weping in hir wey,
And fortune ay they curſen as they gon:
But ſhe fro weping kept hire eyen drey,
Ne in this time word ne ſpake ſhe non.
Hire fader, that this tiding herd anon,
Curſeth the day and time, that nature
Shope him to ben a lives creature.

For out of doute this olde poure man
Was ever in ſuſpect of hire mariage:
For ever he demed, ſin it firſt began,
That whan the lord fulfilled had his corage,
Him wolde thinke it were a diſparage
To his eſtat, ſo lowe for to alight,
And voiden hire as ſone as ever he might.

Agein his doughter haſtily goth he,
(For he by noiſe of folk knew hire coming)
And with hire olde cote, as it might be,
He covereth hire ful ſorwefully weping:
But on hire body might he it not bring,
For rude was the cloth, and more of age
By daies fele than at hire mariage.

Thus with hire fader for a certain ſpace
Dwelleth this flour of wifly patience,
That nother by hire wordes ne hire face,
Beforn the folk, ne eke in hir abſence,
Ne ſhewed ſhe that hire was don offence,
Ne of hire high eſtat no remembrance
Ne hadde ſhe, as by hire contenance.

No wonder is, for in hire gret eſtat
Hire goſt was ever in pleine humilitee;
No tendre mouth, no herte delicat,
No pompe, no ſemblant of realtee;
But ful of patient benignitee,
Diſcrete, and prideles, ay honourable,
And to hire huſbond ever meke and ſtable.

Men ſpeke of Job, and moſt for his humbleſſe,
As clerkes, whan hem liſt, can wel endite,

Namely

Namely of men, but as in ſothfaſtneſſe,
Though clerkes preiſen women but a lite,
Ther can no man in humbleſſe him acquite
As woman can, ne can be half ſo trewe
As women ben, but it be falle of newe.

Pars ſexta.

Fro Boloigne is this erl of Pavie come,
Of which the fame up ſprang to more and leſſe:
And to the peples eres all and ſome
Was couth eke, that a newe markiſeſſe
He with him brought, in ſwiche pomp and richeſſe,
That never was ther ſeen with mannes eye
So noble array in al Weſt Lumbardie.

The markis, which that ſhope and knew all this,
Er that this erl was come, ſent his meſſage
For thilke poure ſely Griſildis,
And ſhe with humble herte and glad viſage,
Not with no ſwollen thought in hire corage,
Came at his heſt, and on hire knees hire ſette,
And reverently and wiſely ſhe him grette.

Griſilde, (quod he) my will is utterly,
This maidén, that ſhal wedded be to me,
Received be to-morwe as really

As

As it poſſible is in myn hous to be:
And eke that every wight in his degree
Have his eſtat in ſitting and ſervice,
And high pleſance, as I can beſt deviſe.

I have no woman ſuffiſant certain
The chambres for to array in ordinance
After my luſt, and therfore wolde I fain,
That thin were all ſwiche manere governance:
Thou knoweſt eke of old all my pleſance;
Though thin array he bad, and evil beſey,
Do thou thy devoir at the leſte wey.

Not only, lord, that I am glad (quod ſhe)
To don your luſt, but I deſire alſo
You for to ſerve and pleſe in my degree,
Withouten fainting, and ſhal evermo:
Ne never for no wele, ne for no wo,
Ne ſhal the goſt within myn herte ſtente
To love you beſt with all my trewe entente.

And with that word ſhe gan the hous to dight,
And tables for to ſette, and beddes make,
And peined her to don all that ſhe might,
Praying the chambereres for Goddes ſake
To haſten hem, and faſte ſwepe and ſhake,

And

And ſhe the moſte ſerviceable of all
Hath every chambre arraied, and his hall.

Abouten undern gan this erl alight,
That with him brought thiſe noble children twey:
For which the peple ran to ſee the ſight
Of hir array, ſo richely beſey:
And than at erſt amonges hem they ſey,
That Walter was no fool, though that him leſt
To change his wif; for it was for the beſt.

For ſhe is fairer, as they demen all,
Than is Griſilde, and more tendre of age,
And fairer fruit betwene hem ſhulde fall,
And more pleſant for hire high linage:
Hire brother eke ſo faire was of viſage,
That hem to ſeen the peple hath caught pleſance,
Commending now the markis governance.

O ſtormy peple, unſad and ever untrewe,
And undiſcrete, and changing as a fane,
Delighting ever in rombel that is newe,
For like the mone waxen ye and wane:
Ay ful of clapping, dere ynough a jane,
Your dome is fals, your conſtance evil preveth,
A ful gret fool is he that on you leveth.

Thus-

Thus ſaiden ſade folk in that citee,
Whan that the peple gaſed up and doun:
For they were glad, right for the noveltee,
To have a newe lady of hir toun.
No more of this make I now mentioun,
But to Griſilde agen I wol me dreſſe,
And telle hire conſtance, and hire beſineſſe.

Ful beſy was Griſilde in every thing,
That to the feſte was appertinent;
Right naught was ſhe abaiſt of hire clothing,
Though it were rude, and ſomdel eke to-rent,
But with glad chere to the yate is went
With other folk, to grete the markiſeſſe,
And after that doth forth hire beſineſſe.

With ſo glad chere his geſtes ſhe receiveth,
And conningly everich in his degree,
That no defaute no man apperceiveth,
But ay they wondren what ſhe mighte be,
That in ſo poure array was for to ſee,
And coude ſwiche honour and reverence,
And worthily they preiſen hire prudence.

In all this mene while ſhe ne ſtent
This maide and eke hire brother to commend

With all hire herte in ful benigne entent,
So wel, that no man coud hire preiſe amend:
But at the laſt whan that thiſe lordes wend
To ſitten doun to mete, he gan to call
Griſilde, as ſhe was beſy in the hall.

Griſilde, (quod he, as it were in his play)
How liketh thee my wif, and hire beautee?
Right wel, my lord, quod ſhe, for in good fay,
A fairer ſaw I never non than ſhe:
I pray to God yeve you proſperitee;
And ſo I hope, that he wol to you ſend
Pleſance ynough unto your lives end.

O thing beſeche I you and warne alſo,
That ye ne prikke with no turmenting
This tendre maiden, as ye han do mo:
For ſhe is foſtred in hire noriſhing
More tendrely, and to my ſuppoſing
She mighte not adverſitee endure,
As coude a poure foſtred creature.

And whan this Walter ſaw hire patience,
Hire glade chere, and no malice at all,
And he ſo often hadde hire don offence,
And ſhe ay ſade and conſtant as a wall,
Continuing ever hire innocence over all,

This

This ſturdy markis gan his herte dreſſe
To rewe upon hire wifly ſtedefaſtneſſe.

This is ynough, Griſilde min, quod he,
Be now no more agaſt, ne evil apaid,
I have thy faith and thy benignitee,
As wel as ever woman was, aſſaid
In gret eſtat, and pourelich arraid:
Now know I, dere wif, thy ſtedefaſtneſſe,
And hire in armes toke, and gan to keſſe.

And ſhe for wonder toke of it no kepe;
She herde not what thing he to hire ſaid:
She ferde as ſhe had ſtert out of a ſlepe,
Til ſhe out of hire maſedneſſe abraid.
Griſilde, quod he, by God that for us deid,
Thou art my wif, non other I ne have,
Ne never had, as God my ſoule ſave.

This is thy doughter, which thou haſt ſuppoſed
To be my wif; that other faithfully
Shal be min heir, as I have ay diſpoſed;
Thou bare hem of thy body trewely:
At Boloigne have I kept hem prively:
Take hem agen, for now maiſt thou not ſay,
That thou haſt lorn non of thy children tway.

And folk, that otherwiſe han ſaid of me,
I warne hem wel, that I have don this dede
For no malice, ne for no crueltee,
But for to aſſay in thee thy womanhede:
And not to ſlee my children (God forbéde)
But for to kepe hem prively and ſtill,
Til I thy purpos knew, and all thy will.

Whan ſhe this herd aſwoune doun ſhe falleth
For pitous joye, and after hire ſwouning
She both hire yonge children to hire calleth,
And in hire armes pitouſly weping
Embraceth hem, and tendrely kiſſing
Ful like a moder with hire ſalte teres
She bathed both hir viſage and hir heres.

O, which a pitous thing it was to ſee
Hire ſwouning, and hire humble vois to here!
Grand mercy, lord, God thank it you (quod ſhe)
That ye han ſaved me my children dere:
Now rekke I never to be ded right here,
Sin I ſtond in your love, and in your grace,
No force of deth, ne whan my ſpirit pace.

O tendre, o dere, o yonge children mine,
Your woful mother wened ſtedfaſtly,

That-

That cruel houndes, or ſom foul vermine
Had eten you; but God of his mercy,
And your benigne fader tendrely
Hath don you kepe: and in that ſame ſtound
Al ſodenly ſhe ſwapt adoun to ground.

And in hire ſwough ſo ſadly holdeth ſhe
Hire children two, whan ſhe gan hem embrace,
That with gret ſleight and gret difficultee
The children from hire arm they gan arrace:
O! many a tere on many a pitous face
Doun ran of hem that ſtoden hire beſide,
Unnethe abouten hire might they abide.

Walter hire gladeth, and hire ſorwe ſlaketh,
She riſeth up abaſhed from hire trance,
And every wight hire joye and feſte maketh,
Til ſhe hath caught agen hire contenance.
Walter hire doth ſo faithfully pleſance,
That it was deintee for to ſeen the chere
Betwix hem two, ſin they ben met in fere.

Thiſe ladies, whan that they hir time ſey,
Han taken hire, and into chambre gon,
And ſtripen hire out of hire rude arrey,
And in a cloth of gold that brighte ſhone,
With a coroune of many a riche ſtone

Upon

Upon hire hed, they into hall hire broughte:
And ther ſhe was honoured as hire ought.

Thus hath this pitous day a blisful end;
For every man, and woman, doth his might
This day in mirth and revel to diſpend,
Til on the welkin ſhone the ſterres bright:
For more ſolempne in every mannes ſight
This feſte was, and greter of coſtage,
Than was the revel of hire mariage.

Ful many a yere in high proſperitee
Liven thiſe two in concord and in reſt,
And richely his doughter maried he
Unto a lord, on of the worthieſt
Of all Itaille, and than in pees and reſt
His wives fader in his court he kepeth,
Til that the ſoule out of his body crepeth.

His ſone ſuccedeth in his heritage,
In reſt and pees, after his fadres day:
And fortunat was eke in mariage,
Al put he not his wif in gret aſſay:
This world is not ſo ſtrong, it is no nay,
As it hath ben in olde times yore,
And herkneth, what this auctour ſaith therfore.

This ſtory is ſaid, not for that wives ſhuld
Folwe Griſilde, as in humilitee,
For it were importable, tho they wold;
But for that every wight in his degree
Shulde be conſtant in adverſitee,
As was Griſilde, therfore Petrark writeth
This ſtorie, which with high ſtile he enditeth.

For ſith a woman was ſo patient
Unto a mortal man, wel more we ought
Receiven all in gree that God us ſent.
For gret ſkill is he preve that he wrought:
But he ne tempteth no man that he bought,
As ſaith ſeint Jame, if ye his piſtell rede;
He preveth folk al day, it is no drede.

And ſuffreth us, as for our exerciſe,
With ſharpe ſcourges of adverſitee,
Ful often to be bete in ſondry wiſe;
Not for to know our will, for certes he
Or we were borne, knew all our freeletee;
And for our beſt is all his governance;
Let us than live in vertuous ſuffrance.

But o word, lordings, herkeneth, or I go:
It were ful hard to finden now adayes

In

In all a toun Grisildes three or two:
For if that they were put to swiche assayes,
The gold of hem hath now so bad alayes
With bras, that though the coine be faire at eye,
It wolde rather brast atwo than plie.

For which here, for the wives love of Bathe,
Whos lif and al hire secte God maintene
In high maistrie, and elles were it scathe,
I wol with lusty herte fresshe and grene,
Say you a song to gladen you, I wene:
And let us stint of ernestful matere.
Herkneth my song, that saith in this manere.

Grisilde is ded, and eke hire patience,
And both at ones buried in Itaille:
For which I crie in open audience,
No wedded man so hardy be to assaille
His wives patience, in trust to find
Grisildes, for in certain he shal faille.

O noble wives, ful of high prudence,
Let non humilitee your tonges naile:
Ne let no clerk have cause or diligence
To write of you a storie of swiche mervaille,
As of Grisildis patient and kinde,
Left Chichevache you swalwe in hire entraille.

Folweth ecco, that holdeth no ſilence,
But ever anſwereth at the countretaille:
Beth not bedaffed for your innocence,
But ſharply taketh on you the governaille:
Emprenteth wel this leſſon in your minde,
For comun profit, ſith it may availle.

Ye archewives, ſtondeth ay at defence,
Sin ye be ſtrong, as is a gret camaille,
Ne ſuffreth not, that men do you offence.
And ſclendre wives, feble as in bataille,
Beth egre as is a tigre yond in Inde;
Ay clappeth as a mill, I you counſaille.

Ne drede hem not, doth hem no reverence,
For though thin huſbond armed be in maille,
The arwes of thy crabbed eloquence
Shal perce his breſt, and eke his aventaille:
In jalouſie I rede eke thou him binde,
And thou ſhalt make him couche as doth a quaille.

If thou be faire, ther folk ben in preſence
Shew thou thy viſage, and thin apparaille:
If thou be foule, be free of thy diſpence,
To get thee frendes ay do thy travaille:
Be ay of chere as light as lefe on linde,
And let him care, and wepe, and wringe, and waille.

THE

THE MARCHANTES PROLOGUE.

WEPING and wailing, care and other ſorwe
I have ynough, on even and on morwe,
Quod the marchant, and ſo have other mo,
That wedded ben; I trowe that it be ſo:
For wel I wot it fareth ſo by me.
I have a wif, the werſte that may be,
For though the fend to hire ycoupled were,
She wolde him overmatche I dare wel ſwere.
What ſhulde I you reherſe in ſpecial
Hire high malice? ſhe is a ſhrew at al.
Ther is a long and a large difference
Betwix Griſildes grete patience,
And of my wife the paſſing crueltee.
Were I unbounden, all ſo mote I the,
I wolde never eft comen in the ſnare.
We wedded men live in ſorwe and care,
Aſſay it who ſo wol, and he ſhal finde
That I ſay ſoth, by ſeint Thomas of Inde,
As for the more part, I ſay not alle;
God ſhilde that it ſhulde ſo befalle.
A good ſire hoſte, I have ywedded be
Thiſe monethes two, and more not parde;
And yet I trowe that he, that all his lif
Wifles hath ben, though that men wolde him rife

Into the herte, ne coude in no manere
Tellen ſo much ſorwe, as I you here
Coud tellen of my wives curſedneſſe.
Now, quod our hoſte, marchant, ſo God you bleſſe,
Sin ye ſo mochel knowen of that art,
Ful hertely I pray you tell us part.
Gladly, quod he, but of min owen ſore
For ſory herte I tellen may no more.

THE MARCHANTES TALE.

WHILOM ther was dwelling in Lumbardie
A worthy knight, that born was at Pavie,
In which he lived in gret proſperitee;
And ſixty yere a wifles man was he,
And folwed ay his bodily delit
On women, ther as was his appetit,
As don thiſe fooles that ben ſeculere.
And whan that he was paſſed ſixty yere,
Were it for holineſſe or for dotage,
I cannot ſain, but ſwiche a gret corage
Hadde this knight to ben a wedded man,
That day and night he doth all that he can
To eſpien, wher that he might wedded be;
Praying our lord to granten him, that he
Mighte ones knowen of that blisful lif,
That is betwix an huſbond and his wif,

And

And for to live under that holy bond,
With which God firſte man and woman bond.
Non other lif (ſaid he) is worth a bene:
For wedlok is ſo eſy and ſo clene,
That in this world it is a paradiſe.
Thus ſaith this olde knight, that was ſo wiſe.
And certainly, as ſoth as God is king,
To take a wif, it is a glorious thing,
And namely whan a man is old and hore,
Than is a wif the fruit of his treſore;
Than ſhuld he take a yong wif and a faire,
On which he might engendren him an heire,
And lede his lif in joye and in ſolas,
Wheras thiſe bachelers ſingen alas,
Whan that they finde any adverſitee
In love, which n'is but childiſh vanitee.
And trewely it ſit wel to be ſo,
That bachelers have often peine and wo:
On brotel ground they bilde, and brotelneſſe
They finden, whan they wenen ſikerneſſe:
They live but as a bird or as a beſte,
In libertee and under non areſte,
Ther as a wedded man in his eſtat
Liveth a lif blisful and ordinat,
Under the yoke of mariage ybound:
Wel may his herte in joye and bliſſe abound.

For who can be ſo buxom as a wif?
Who is ſo trewe and eke ſo ententif
To kepe him, ſike and hole, as is his make?
For wele or wo ſhe n'ill him not forſake:
She n'is not wery him to love and ſerve,
Though that he lie bedrede til that he ſterve.
And yet ſom clerkes ſain, it is not ſo,
Of which he Theophraſt is on of tho: 9170
What force though Theophraſt liſt for to lie?
Ne take no wif, quod he, for huſbondrie,
As for to ſpare in houſhold thy diſpence:
A trewe ſervant doth more diligence
Thy good to kepe, than doth thin owen wif,
For ſhe wol claimen half part al hire lif.
And if that thou be ſike, ſo God me ſave,
Thy veray frendes or a trewe knave
Wol kepe thee bet than ſhe, that waiteth ay
After thy good, and hath don many a day. 9180
This ſentence, and an hundred thinges werſe
Writeth this man ther God his bones curſe.
But take no kepe of al ſwiche vanitee,
Defieth Theophraſt, and herkeneth me.
A wif is Goddes yeſte veraily;
All other maner yeſtes hardely,
As londes, rentes, paſture, or commune,
Or mebles, all ben yeſtes of fortune,

That

That paſſen as a ſhadow on the wall:
But drede thou not, if plainly ſpeke I ſhal,
A wif wol laſt and in thin hous endure,
Wel lenger than thee liſt paraventure.
Mariage is a ful gret ſacrament;
He which that hath no wif I hold him ſhent;
He liveth helples, and all deſolat:
(I ſpeke of folk in ſeculer eſtat)
And herkneth why, I ſay not this for nought,
That woman is for mannes helpe ywrought.
The highe God, whan he had Adam maked,
And ſaw him al alone belly naked,
God of his grete goodneſſe ſaide than,
Let us now make an helpe unto this man
Like to himſelf, and than he made him Eve.
Here may ye ſee, and hereby may ye preve,
That a wif is mannes helpe and his comfort,
His paradis terreſtre and his diſport:
So buxom and ſo vertuous is ſhe,
They moſten nedes live in unitee:
O fleſh they ben, and o fleſh, as I geſſe,
Hath but on herte in wele and in diſtreſſe.
A wif? a! ſeinte Marie, *benedicite*,
How might a man have any adverſite
That hath a wif? certes I cannot ſeye.
The bliſſe the which that is betwix hem tweye

Ther

Ther may no tonge telle or herte thinke.
If he be poure, ſhe helpeth him to ſwinke;
She kepeth his good, and waſteth never a del;
All that hire huſbond doth, hire liketh wel;
She ſaith not ones nay, whan he ſaith ye;
Do this, ſaith he; al redy, ſire, ſaith ſhe.
O blisful ordre, o wedlok precious,
Thou art ſo mery, and eke ſo vertuous,
And ſo commended, and approved eke,
That every man that holt him worth a leke,
Upon his bare knees ought all his lif
Thanken his God, that him hath ſent a wif,
Or elles pray to God him for to ſend
A wif, to laſt unto his lives end.
For than his lif is ſet in ſikerneſſe,
He may not be deceived, as I geſſe,
So that he werche after his wives rede;
Than may he boldly beren up his hede,
They ben ſo trewe, and therwithal ſo wiſe.
For which, if thou wilt werchen as the wiſe,
Do alway ſo, as women wol thee rede.
Lo how that Jacob, as thiſe clerkes rede,
By good conſeil of his mother Rebekke
Bounde the kiddes ſkin about his nekke;
For which his fadres beniſon he wan.
Lo Judith, as the ſtorie eke tell can,

By

By good conſeil ſhe Goddes peple kept,
And ſlow him Holofernes while he ſlept.
Lo Abigail, by good conſeil how ſhe
Saved hire huſbond Nabal, whan that he
Shuld han be ſlain. And loke, Heſter alſo
By good conſeil delivered out of wo
The peple of God, and made him Mardochee
Of Aſſuere enhaunſed for to be.
Ther n'is no thing in gree ſuperlatif
(As ſaith Senek) above an humble wif.
Suffer thy wives tonge, as Caton bit,
She ſhal command, and thou ſhalt ſuffren it,
And yet ſhe wol obey of curteſie.
A wif is keper of thin huſbondrie:
Wel may the ſike man bewaile and wepe,
Ther as ther is no wif the hous to kepe.
I warne thee, if wiſely thou wilt werche,
Love wel thy wif, as Criſt loveth his cherche:
If thou loveſt thyſelf, love thou thy wif.
No man hateth his fleſh, but in his lif
He foſtreth it, and therfore bid I thee,
Cheriſh thy wif, or thou ſhalt never the.
Huſbond and wif, what ſo men jape or play,
Of worldly folk holden the ſiker way:
They ben ſo knit, ther may non harm betide,
And namely upon the wives ſide.

For

For which this January, of whom I told,
Conſidered hath within his dayes old
The luſty lif, the vertuous quiete,
That is in mariage hony-ſwete.
And for his frendes on a day he ſent
To tellen hem th' effect of his entent.
With face ſad, his tale he hath hem told:
He ſayde, frendes, I am hore and old,
And almoſt (God wot) on my pittes brinke,
Upon my ſoule ſomwhat moſt I thinke.
I have my body folily diſpended,
Bleſſed be God that it ſhal ben amended:
For I wol ben certain a wedded man,
And that anon in all the haſt I can.
Unto ſom maiden, faire and tendre of age,
I pray you ſhapeth for my mariage
All ſodenly, for I wol not abide:
And I wol fonde to eſpien on my ſide,
To whom I may be wedded haſtily.
But for as moche as ye ben more than I,
Ye ſhullen rather ſwiche a thing eſpien
Than I, and wher me beſte were to allien.
But o thing warn I you, my frendes dere,
I wol non old wif han in no manere:
She ſhal not paſſen twenty yere certain,
Old fiſh and yonge fleſh wold I have fain.

Bet

Bet is (quod he) a pike than a pikerel,
And bet than old beef is the tendre veel.
I wol no woman thirty yere of age,
It is but beneſtraw and gret forage.
And eke thiſe olde widewes (God it wote)
They connen ſo moch craft on Wades bote,
So mochel broken harm whan that hem leſt,
That with hem ſhuld I never live in reſt.
For ſondry ſcoles maken ſubtil clerkes;
Woman of many ſcoles half a clerk is.
But certainly, a yong thing men may gie,
Right as men may warm wax with handes plie.
Wherfore I ſay you plainly in a clauſe,
I wol non old wif han right for this cauſe.
For if ſo were I hadde ſwiche meſchance,
That I in hire ne coude have no pleſance,
Than ſhuld I lede my lif in avoutrie,
And ſo ſtreight to the devil whan I die.
Ne children ſhuld I non upon hire geten:
Yet were me lever houndes had me eten,
Than that min heritage ſhulde fall
In ſtraunge hondes: and this I tell you all.
I dote not, I wot the cauſe why
Men ſhulden wedde: and furthermore wot I,
Ther ſpeketh many a man of mariage,
That wot no more of it than wot my page,

For

For which cauſes a man ſhuld take a wif.
If he ne may not liven chaſt his lif,
Take him a wif with gret devotion,
Becauſe of leful procreation
Of children, to the honour of God above,
And not only for paramour or love;
And for they ſhulden lecherie eſchue,
And yeld hir dette whan that it is due:
Or for that eche of hem ſhuld helpen other
In meſchefe, as a ſuſter ſhal the brother,
And live in chaſtitee ful holily.
But, fires, (by your leve) that am not I,
For God be thanked, I dare make avaunt,
I fele my limmes ſtark and ſuffiſant
To don all that a man belongeth to:
I wot myſelven beſt what I may do.
Though I be hoor, I fare as doth a tre,
That bloſmeth er the fruit ywoxen be;
The bloſmy tre n'is neither drie ne ded:
I fele me no wher hoor but on my hed.
Min herte and all my limmes ben as grene,
As laurer thurgh the yere is for to ſene.
And ſin that ye han herd all min entent,
I pray you to my will ye wolde aſſent.
Diverſe men diverſely him told
Of mariage many enſamples old;

Som

Som blamed it, ſom praiſed it certain;
But atte laſte, ſhortly for to ſain,
(As all day falleth altercation,
Betwixen frendes in diſputiſon)
Ther fell a ſtrif betwix his brethren two,
Of which that on was cleped Placebo,
Juſtinus ſothly called was that other.
Placebo ſayd; O January brother,
Ful litel nede han ye, my lord ſo dere,
Conſeil to aſke of any that is here:
But that ye ben ſo ful of ſapience,
That you ne liketh for your high prudence,
To weiven fro the word of Salomon.
This word ſayd he unto us everich on;
Werke alle thing by conſeil, thus ſayd he,
And than ne ſhalt thou not repenten thee.
But though that Salomon ſpake ſwiche a word,
Min owen dere brother and my lord,
So wiſly God my ſoule bringe at reſt,
I hold your owen conſeil is the beſt.
For, brother min, take of me this motif,
I have now ben a court-man all my lif,
And God it wot, though I unworthy be,
I have ſtonden in ful gret degree
Abouten lordes of ful high eſtat:
Yet had I never with non of hem debat,

I never hem contraried trewely.
I wot wel that my lord can more than I;
What that he ſaith, I hold it firme and ſtable,
I ſay the ſame, or elles thing ſemblable.
A ful gret fool is any conſeillour,
That ſerveth any lord of high honour,
That dare preſume, or ones thinken it,
That his conſeil ſhuld paſſe his lordes wit.
Nay, lordes be no fooles by my fay.
Ye han yourſelven ſhewed here to-day
So high ſentence, ſo holily, and wel,
That I conſent, and confirme every del
Your wordes all, and your opinioun.
By God ther n'is no man in all this toun
Ne in Itaille, coud bet han yſayd:
Criſt holt him of this conſeil wel appaid.
And trewely it is an high corage
Of any man that ſtopen is in age,
To take a young wif, by my fader kin:
Your herte hongeth on a joly pin.
Doth now in this matere right as you leſt,
For finally I hold it for the beſt.
Juſtinus, that ay ſtille ſat and herd,
Right in this wiſe he to Placebo anſwerd.
Now, brother min, be patient I pray,
Sin ye han ſaid, and herkneth what I ſay.

Senek

Senek among his other wordes wiſe
Saith, that a man ought him right wel aviſe,
To whom he yeveth his lond or his catel.
And ſith I ought aviſen me right wel,
To whom I yeve my good away fro me,
Wel more I ought aviſen me, parde,
To whom I yeve my body: for alway
I warne you wel it is no childes play
To take a wif without aviſement.
Men muſt enqueren (this is min aſſent)
Wheder ſhe be wiſe and ſobre, or dronkelewe,
Or proud, or elles other waies a ſhrew,
A chideſter, or a waſter of thy good,
Or riche or poure, or elles a man is wood.
Al be it ſo, that no man finden ſhal
Non in this world, that trotteth hol in al,
Ne man, ne beſte, ſwiche as men can deviſe,
But natheles it ought ynough ſuffice
With any wif, if ſo were that ſhe had
Mo goode thewes, than hire vices bad:
And all this axeth leiſer to enquere.
For God it wot, I have wept many a tere
Ful prively, ſin that I had a wif.
Praiſe who ſo wol a wedded mannes lif,
Certain I find in it but coſt and care,
And obſervances of alle bliſſes bare.

And yet, God wot, my neighebours aboute,
And namely of women many a route,
Sain that I have the moſte ſtedefaſt wif,
And eke the mekeſt on that bereth lif.
But I wot beſt, wher wringeth me my ſho.
Ye may for me right as you liketh do.
Aviſeth you, ye ben a man of age,
How that ye entren into mariage
And namely with a yong wif and a faire.
By him that made water, fire, erthe, and aire
The yongeſt man. that is in all this route,
Is beſy ynow to bringen it aboute
To han his wif alone, truſteth me:
Ye ſhul not pleſen hire fully yeres three,
This is to ſain, to don hire ful pleſance.
A wif axeth ful many an obſervance.
I pray you that ye be not evil appaid.
Wel, quod this January, and haſt thou ſaide?
Straw for Senek, and ſtraw for thy proverbes,
I counte not a panier ful of herbes
Of ſcole termes; wiſer men than thou,
As thou haſt herd, aſſented here right now
To my purpos: Placebo, what ſaye ye?
I ſay it is a curſed man, quod he,
That letteth matrimoine ſikerly.
And with that word they riſen ſodenly,

And ben aſſented fully, that he ſholde
Be wedded whan him liſt, and wher he wolde.
High fantaſie and curious beſineſſe
Fro day to day gan in the ſoule empreſſe
Of January about his mariage.
Many a faire ſhap, and many a faire viſage
Ther paſſeth thurgh his herte night by night,
As who ſo toke a mirrour poliſhed bright,
And ſet it in a comune market place,
Than ſhuld he ſee many a figure pace
By his mirrour, and in the ſame wiſe
Gan January in with his thought deviſe
Of maidens, which that dwelten him beſide:
He wiſte not wher that he might abide,
For if that on have beautee in hire face,
Another ſtont ſo in the peples grace
For hire ſadneſſe and hire benignitee,
That of the peple the greteſt vois hath ſhe:
And ſom were riche and hadden a bad name.
But natheles, betwix erneſt and game,
He at the laſt appointed him on on,
And let all other from his herte gon,
And chees hire of his owen auctoritee,
For love is blind all day, and may not ſee.
And whan that he was in his bed ybrought,
He purtreied in his herte and in his thought

Hire freſhe beautee, and hire age tendre,
Hire middel ſmal, hire armes long and ſclendre,
Hire wiſe governance, hire gentilleſſe,
Hire womanly bering, and hire ſadneſſe.
And whan that he on hire was condeſcended,
Him thought his chois it might not ben amended;
For whan that he himſelf concluded had,
Him thought eche other mannes wit ſo bad,
That impoſſible it were to replie
Again his chois; this was his fantaſie.
His frendes ſent he to, at his inſtance,
And praied hem to don him that pleſance,
That haſtily they wolden to him come;
He wolde abregge hir labour all and ſome:
Neded no more to hem to go ne ride,
He was appointed ther he wolde abide.
Placebo came, and eke his frendes ſone,
And alderfirſt he bade hem all a bone,
That non of hem non argumentes make
Again the purpos that he hath ytake:
Which purpos was pleſant to God (ſaid he)
And veray ground of his proſperitee.
He ſaid, ther was a maiden in the toun,
Which that of beautee hadde gret renoun,
Al were it ſo, ſhe were of ſmal degree,
Sufficeth him hire youth and hire beautee:

Which maid (he ſaid) he wold han to his wif
To lede in eſe and holineſſe his life:
And thanked God, that he might han hire all,
That no wight with his bliſſe parten ſhall:
And praied hem to labour in this nede,
And ſhapen that he faille not to ſpede.
For than, he ſayd, his ſpirit was at eſe;
Than is (quod he) nothing may me diſpleſe,
Save o thing pricketh in my conſcience,
The which I wol reherſe in your preſence.
I have (quod he) herd ſaid ful yore ago,
Ther may no man han parfite bliſſes two,
This is to ſay, in erthe and eke in heven.
For though he kepe him fro the ſinnes ſeven,
And eke from every branch of thilke tree,
Yet is ther ſo parfit felicitee,
And ſo gret eſe and luſt in mariage,
That ever I am agaſt now in min age,
That I ſhal leden now ſo mery a lif,
So delicat, withouten wo or ſtrif,
That I ſhal han min heven in erthe here.
For ſin that veray heven is bought ſo dere
With tribulation and gret penance,
How ſhuld I than, living in ſwiche pleſance
As alle wedded men don with hir wives,
Come to the bliſſe, ther Criſt eterne on live is?

This is my drede, and ye, my brethren tweie,
Aſſoileth me this queſtion I preie.
Juſtinus, which that hated his folie,
Anſwerd anon right in his japerie;
And for he wold his longe tale abrege,
He wolde non auctoritee allege,
But ſayde, ſire, ſo ther be non obſtacle
Other than this, God of his hie miracle,
And of his mercy may ſo for you werche,
That er ye have your rights of holy cherche,
Ye may repent of wedded mannes lif,
In which ye ſain ther is no wo ne ſtrif:
And elles God forbede, but if he ſent
A wedded man his grace him to repent
Wel often, rather than a ſingle man.
And therfore, ſire, the beſt rede that I can,
Deſpeire you not, but haveth in memorie,
Paraventure ſhe may be your purgatorie;
She may be Goddes mene and Goddes whippe;
Than ſhal your ſoule up unto heven ſkippe
Swifter than doth an arow of a bow.
I hope to God hereafter ye ſhal know,
That ther n'is non ſo gret felicitee
In mariage, ne never more ſhal be,
That you ſhal let of your ſalvation,
So that ye uſe, as ſkill is and reſon,

The

The luſtes of your wif attemprely,
And that ye pleſe hire nat to amorouſly:
And that ye kepe you eke from other ſinne.
My tale is don, for my wit is but thinne.
Beth not agaſt hereof, my brother dere,
But let us waden out of this matere.
The wif of Bathe, if ye han underſtond,
Of mariage, which ye now han in hond,
Declared hath ful wel in litel ſpace:
Fareth now wel, God have you in his grace.
And with this word this Juſtine and his brother
Han take hir leve, and eche of hem of other.
And whan they ſaw that it muſt nedes be,
They wroughten ſo by ſleighte and wiſe tretee,
That ſhe this maiden, which that Maius hight,
As haſtily as ever that ſhe might,
Shal wedded be unto this January,
I trow it were to longe you to tary,
If I you told of every ſcript and bond,
By which that ſhe was feoffed in his lond;
Or for to rekken of hire rich array.
But finally ycomen is the day,
That to the chirche bothe ben they went,
For to receive the holy ſacrament.
Forth cometh the preeſt, with ſtole about his nekke,
And bade hire be like Sara and Rebekke,

In wisdome and in trouthe of mariage:
And sayd his orisons, as is usage,
And crouched hem, and bade God shuld hem blesse,
And made all siker ynow with holinesse.
Thus ben they wedded with solempnitee;
And at the feste sitteth he and she
With other worthy folk upon the deis.
Al ful of joye and blisse is the paleis,
And ful of instruments, and of vitaille,
The moste deinteous of all Itaille.
Beforn hem stood swiche instruments of soun,
That Orpheus, ne of Thebes Amphion,
Ne maden never swiche a melodie.
At every cours in came loude minstralcie,
That never Joab tromped for to here,
Ne he Theodomas yet half so clere
At Thebes, whan the citee was in doute.
Bacchus the win hem skinketh al aboute,
And Venus laugheth upon every wight,
(For January was become hire knight,
And wolde bothe assaien his corage
In libertee, and eke in mariage)
And with hire firebrond in hire hond aboute
Danceth before the bride and all the route.
And certainly I dare right wel say this,
Ymeneus, that God of wedding is,

Saw

Saw never his lif ſo mery a wedded man.
Hold thou thy pees, thou poet Marcian,
That writeſt us that ilke wedding mery
Of hire Philologie and him Mercurie,
And of the ſonges that the Muſes ſonge:
To ſmal is both thy pen and eke thy tonge
For to deſcriven of this mariage.
Whan tendre youth hath wedded ſtouping age,
Ther is ſwiche mirth that it may not be writen;
Aſſaieth it yourſelf, than may ye witen
If that I lie or non in this matere.
Maius, that ſit with ſo benigne a chere,
Hire to behold it ſemed faerie,
Quene Heſter loked never with ſwiche an eye
On Aſſuere, ſo meke a look hath ſhe,
I may you not deviſe all hire beautee;
But thus moch of hire beautee tell I may,
That ſhe was like the brighte morwe of May
Fulfilled of all beautee, and pleſance.
This January is raviſhed in a trance,
At every time he loketh in hire face,
But in his herte he gan hire to manace,
That he that night in armes wold hire ſtreine
Harder than ever Paris did Heleine.
But natheles yet had he gret pitee
That thilke night offenden hire muſt he,

And

And thought, alas, o tendre creature,
Now wolde God ye mighten wel endure
All my corage, it is ſo ſharpe and kene;
I am agaſt ye ſhal it nat ſuſtene.
But God forbede, that I did all my might.
Now wolde God that it were waxen night,
And that the night wold laſten ever mo.
I wold that all this peple were ago.
And finally he doth all his labour,
As he beſt mighte, ſaving his honour,
To haſte hem fro the mete in ſubtil wiſe.

The time came that reſon was to riſe,
And after that men dance, and drinken faſt,
And ſpices all about the hous they caſt,
And ful of joye and bliſſe is every man,
All but a ſquier, that highte Damian,
Which carf beforn the knight ful many a day:
He was ſo raviſht on his lady May,
That for the veray peine he was nie wood;
Almoſt he ſwelt, and ſwouned ther he ſtood:
So ſore hath Venus hurt him with hire brond,
As that ſhe bare it dancing in hire hond.
And to his bed he went him haſtily;
No more of him as at this time ſpeke I;
But ther I let him wepe ynow and plaine,
Til freſhe May wol rewen on his peine.

O peri-

O perilous fire, that in the bedſtraw bredeth!
O famuler fo, that his ſervice bedeth!
O ſervant traitour, falſe of holy hewe,
Like to the nedder in boſom ſlie untrewe,
God ſhelde us alle from your acquaintance!
O January, dronken in pleſance
Of mariage, ſee how thy Damian,
Thin owen ſquier and thy boren man,
Entendeth for to do thee vilanie:
God grante thee thin homly fo to eſpie.
For in this world n'is werſe peſtilence,
Than homly fo, all day in thy preſence.
Parformed hath the ſonne his arke diurne,
No longer may the body of him ſojourne
On the oriſont, as in that latitude:
Night with his mantel, that is derke and rude,
Gan overſprede the Hemiſperie aboute:
For which departed is this luſty route
Fro January, with thank on every ſide.
Home to hir houſes luſtily they ride,
Ther as they don hir thinges, as hem leſt,
And whan they ſaw hir time gon to reſt.
Sone after that this haſtif January
Wol go to bed, he wol no longer tary.
He drinketh Ipocras, clarre, and vernage
Of ſpices hot, to encreſen his corage:

And

And many a letuarie had he ful fine,
Swiche as the curſed monk dan Conſtantine
Hath written in his book *de Coitu*;
To ete hem all he wolde nothing eſchue:
And to his privee frendes thus ſayd he:
For Goddes love, as ſone as it may be,
Let voiden all this hous in curteis wiſe.
And they han don right as he wol deviſe.
Men drinken, and the travers drawe anon;
The bride is brought a-bed as ſtill as ſton;
And whan the bed was with the preeſt ybleſſed,
Out of the chambre hath every wight him dreſſed,
And January hath faſt in armes take
His freſhe May, his paradis, his make.
He lulleth hire, he kiſſeth hire ful oft;
With thicke briſtles of his berd unſoft,
Like to the ſkin of houndfiſh, ſharp as brere,
(For he was ſhave al newe in his manere)
He rubbeth hire upon hire tendre face,
And ſayde thus; Alas! I mote treſpace
To you, my ſpouſe, and you gretly offend,
Or time come that I wol doun deſcend.
But natheles conſidereth this, (quod he)
Ther n'is no werkman, whatſoever he be,
That may both werken wel and haſtily:
This wol be don at leiſer parfitly.

It

It is no force how longe that we play;
In trewe wedlok coupled be we tway;
And bleſſed be the yoke that we ben inne,
For in our actes may ther be no ſinne.
A man may do no ſinne with his wif,
Ne hurt himſelven with his owen knif:
For we have leve to play us by the lawe.
Thus laboureth he, til that the day gan dawe,
And than he taketh a ſop in fine clarre,
And upright in his bed than ſitteth he.
And after that he ſang ful loud and clere,
And kiſt his wif, and maketh wanton chere.
He was al coltiſh, ful of ragerie,
And ful of jergon, as a flecked pie.
The ſlacke ſkin about his necke ſhaketh,
While that he ſang, ſo chanteth he and craketh.
But God wot what that May thought in hire herte,
Whan ſhe him ſaw up ſitting in his ſherte
In his night cap, and with his necke lene:
She praiſeth not his playing worth a bene.
Than ſayd he thus; my reſte wol I take
Now day is come, I may no lenger wake;
And doun he layd his hed and ſlept til prime.
And afterward, whan that he ſaw his time,
Up riſeth January, but freſhe May
Held hire in chambre til the fourthe day,

As-

As uſage is of wives for the beſte.
For every labour ſomtime moſte han reſte,
Or elles longe may he not endure;
This is to ſay, no lives creature,
Be it of fiſh, or brid, or beſt, or man.
Now wol I ſpeke of woful Damian,
That langureth for love, as ye ſhul here;
Therfore I ſpeke to him in this manere.
I ſay, O ſely Damian, alas!
Anſwer to this demand, as in this cas,
How ſhalt thou to thy lady freſhe May
Tellen thy wo? She wol alway ſay nay;
Eke if thou ſpeke, ſhe wol thy wo bewrein;
God be thin help, I can no better ſein.
This ſike Damian in Venus fire
So brenneth, that he dieth for deſire;
For which he put his lif in aventure,
No lenger might he in this wiſe endure,
But prively a penner gan he borwe,
And in a lettre wrote he all his ſorwe,
In manere of a complaint or a lay,
Unto his faire freſhe lady May.
And in a purſe of ſilk, heng on his ſherte,
He hath it put, and layd it at his herte.
The mone that at none was thilke day
That January hath wedded freſhe May

In ten of Taure, was into Cancer gliden;
So long hath Maius in hire chambre abiden,
As cuſtome is unto thiſe nobles alle.
A bride ſhal not eten in the halle,
Til dayes four or three dayes at the leſte
Ypaſſed ben, than let hire go to feſte.
The fourthe day complete fro none to none,
Whan that the highe meſſe was ydone,
In halle ſat this January and May,
As freſh as is the brighte ſomers day.
And ſo befel, how that this goode man
Remembred him upon this Damian,
And ſayde; Seinte Marie, how may it be,
That Damian entendeth not to me?
Is he ay ſike? or how may this betide?
His ſquiers, which that ſtoden ther beſide,
Excuſed him, becauſe of his ſikneſſe,
Which letted him to don his beſineſſe:
Non other cauſe mighte make him tary.
That me forthinketh, quod this January;
He is a gentil ſquier by my trouthe,
If that he died, it were gret harme and routhe.
He is as wiſe, diſcret, and as ſecree,
As any man I wote of his degree,
And therto manly and eke ſerviſable,
And for to ben a thrifty man right able.

But

But after mete as ſone as ever I may
I wol myſelfe viſite him, and eke May,
To don him all the comfort that I can.
And for that word him bleſſed every man,
That of his bountee and his gentilleſſe
He wolde ſo comforten in ſikneſſe
His ſquier, for it was a gentil dede.

Dame, quod this January, take good hede,
At after mete, ye with your women alle,
(Whan that ye ben in chambre out of this halle)
That all ye gon to ſee this Damian:
Doth him diſport, he is a gentil man,
And telleth him that I wol him viſite,
Have I no thing but reſted me a lite:
And ſpede you faſte, for I wol abide
Til that ye ſlepen faſte by my ſide.
And with that word he gan unto him calle
A ſquier, that was marſhal of his halle,
And told him certain thinges that he wolde.

This freſhe May hath ſtreight hire way yholde
With all hire women unto Damian.
Doun by his beddes ſide ſit ſhe than,
Comforting him as goodly as ſhe may.

This Damian, whan that his time he ſay,
In ſecree wiſe, his purſe, and eke his bill,
In which that he ywritten had his will,

Hath

Hath put into hire hond withouten more,
Save that he ſiked wonder depe and ſore,
And ſoftely to hire right thus ſayd he;
Mercie, and that ye nat diſcover me:
For I am ded, if that this thing be kid.
This purſe hath ſhe in with hire boſome hid,
And went hire way; ye get no more of me;
But unto January ycome is ſhe,
That on his beddes ſide ſate ful ſoft.
He taketh hire, and kiſſeth hire ful oft:
And layd him doun to ſlepe, and that anon.
She feined hire, as that ſhe muſte gon
Ther as ye wote that every wight mot nede;
And whan ſhe of this bill hath taken hede,
She rent it all to cloutes at the laſt,
And in the privee ſoftely it caſt.
Who ſtudieth now but faire freſhe May?
Adoun by olde January ſhe lay,
That ſlepte, til the cough hath him awaked:
Anon he prayd hire ſtripen hire al naked,
He wolde of hire, he ſaid, have ſom pleſance;
And ſaid, hire clothes did him encombrance.
And ſhe obeieth him, be hire lefe or loth.
But leſt that precious folk be with me wroth,
How that he wrought, I dare nat to you tell,
Or wheder hire thought it paradis or hell;

But ther I let hem werken in hir wiſe
Til eveſong rang, and that they muſt ariſe.
Were it by deſtinee, or aventure,
Were it by influence, or by nature,
Or conſtellation, that in ſwiche eſtat
The heven ſtood at that time fortunat,
As for to put a bill of Venus werkes
(For alle thing hath time, as ſayn thiſe clerkes)
To any woman for to get hire love,
I cannot ſay, but grete God above,
That knoweth that non act is cauſeles,
He deme of all, for I wol hold my pees.
But ſoth is this, how that this freſhe May
Hath taken ſwiche impreſſion that day
Of pitee on this ſike Damian,
That fro hire herte ſhe ne driven can
The remembrance for to don him eſe.
Certain (thought ſhe) whom that this thing diſpleſe
I rekke not, for here I him aſſure,
To love him beſt of any creature,
Though he no more hadde than his ſherte.
Lo, pitee renneth ſone in gentil herte.
Here may ye ſeen, how excellent franchiſe
In women is whan they hem narwe aviſe.
Som tyraunt is, as ther ben many on,
That hath an herte as hard as any ſton,

Which

Which wold han lette him ſterven in the place
Wel rather than han granted him hire grace:
And hem rejoycen in hir cruel pride,
And rekken not to ben an homicide.
This gentil May, fulfilled of pitee,
Right of hire hond a lettre maketh ſhe,
In which ſhe granteth him hire veray grace;
Ther lacked nought, but only day and place,
Wher that ſhe might unto his luſt ſuffice:
For it ſhal be, right as he wol deviſe.
And whan ſhe ſaw hire time upon a day
To viſiten this Damian goth this May,
And ſotilly this lettre doun ſhe threſt
Under his pilwe, rede it if him leſt.
She taketh him by the hond, and hard him twiſt
So ſecretly, that no wight of it wiſt,
And bade him ben all hol, and forth ſhe went
To January, whan he for hire ſent.
Up riſeth Damian the nexte morwe,
Al paſſed was his ſikneſſe and his ſorwe.
He kembeth him, he proineth him and piketh,
He doth all that his lady luſt and liketh;
And eke to January he goth as lowe,
As ever did a dogge for the bowe.
He is ſo pleſant unto every man,
(For craft is all, who ſo that don it can)

That every wight is fain to ſpeke him good;
And fully in his ladies grace he ſtood.
Thus let I Damian about his nede,
And in my tale forth I wol procede.
Som clerkes holden that felicitee
Stant in delit, and therfore certain he
This noble January, with all his might
In honeſt wiſe as longeth to a knight,
Shope him to liven ful deliciouſly.
His houſing, his array, as honeſtly
To his degree was maked as a kinges.
Amonges other of his honeſt thinges
He had a gardin walled all with ſton,
So fayre a gardin wote I no wher non.
For out of doute I verily ſuppoſe,
That he that wrote the Romant of the Roſe,
Ne coude of it the beautee wel deviſe:
Ne Priapus ne mighte not ſuffiſe,
Though he be god of gardins, for to tell
The beautee of the gardin, and the well,
That ſtood under a laurer alway grene.
Ful often time he Pluto and his quene
Proſerpina, and alle hir faerie,
Diſporten hem and maken melodie
About that well, and daunced, as men told.
This noble knight, this January the old

Swiche

Swiche deintee hath in it to walke and pley,
That he wol ſuffre no wight bere the key,
Sauf he himſelf, for of the ſmal wiket
He bare alway of ſilver a cliket,
With which whan that him liſt he it unſhette.
And whan that he wold pay his wives dette
In ſomer ſeſon thider wold he go,
And May his wif, and no wight but they two;
And thinges which that were not don a-bedde,
He in the gardin parfourmed hem and ſpedde.
And in this wiſe many a mery day
Lived this January and freſhe May,
But worldly joye may not alway endure
To January, ne to no creature.
O ſoden hap, o thou fortune unſtable,
Like to the Scorpion ſo deceivable,
That flatreſt with thy hed whan thou wolt ſting;
Thy tayl is deth, thurgh thin enveniming.
O brotel joye, o ſwete poyſon queinte,
O monſtre, that ſo ſotilly canſt peinte
Thy giftes, under hewe of ſtedfaſtneſſe,
That thou deceiveſt bothe more and leſſe,
Why haſt thou January thus deceived,
That haddeſt him for thy ful frend received?
And now thou haſt beraft him both his eyen,
For ſorwe of which deſireth he to dyen.

Alas! this noble January free,
Amidde his luſt and his proſperitee
Is waxen blind, and that al ſodenly.
He wepeth and he waileth pitouſly;
And therwithall, the fire of jalouſie
(Leſt that his wif ſhuld fall in ſom folie)
So brent his herte, that he wolde fain,
That ſom man had both him and hire yſlain;
For nother after his deth, ne in his lif,
Ne wold he that ſhe were no love ne wif,
But ever live as a widewe in clothes blake,
Sole as the turtle that hath loſt hire make.
But at the laſt, after a moneth or tway
His ſorwe gan aſſwagen, ſoth to ſay.
For whan he wiſt it might non other be,
He patiently toke his adverſitee:
Save out of doute he ne may nat forgon,
That he n'as jalous ever more in on:
Which jalouſie it was ſo outrageous,
That neither in halle, ne in non other hous,
Ne in non other place never the mo
He n'olde ſuffre hire for to ride or go,
But if that he had honde on hire alway.
For which ful often wepeth freſhe May,
That loveth Damian ſo brenningly,
That ſhe moſte either dien ſodenly,

Or

Or elles ſhe moſte han him as hire leſt:
She waited whan hire herte wold to-breſt.
  Upon that other ſide Damian
Becomen is the ſorwefulleſt man
That ever was, for neither night ne day
Ne might he ſpeke a word to freſhe May,
As to his purpos of no ſwiche matere,
But if that January muſt it here,
That had an hand upon hire evermo,
But natheles, by writing to and fro,
And privee ſignes, wiſt he what ſhe ment,
And ſhe knew eke the fin of his entent.
  O January, what might it thee availe,
Though thou might ſeen, as fer as ſhippes ſaile?
For as good is blind to deceived be,
As be deceived, whan a man may ſee.
Lo Argus, which that had an hundred eyen,
For all that ever he coude pore or prien,
Yet was he blent, and, God wot, ſo ben mo,
That wenen wiſly that it be not ſo:
Paſſe over is an eſe, I ſay no more.
  This freſhe May, of which I ſpake of yore,
In warm wex hath enprented the cliket,
That January bare of the ſmal wiket,
By which into his gardin oft he went;
And Damian that knew all hire entent

The cliket contrefeted prively;
Ther n'is no more to ſay, but haſtily
Som wonder by this cliket ſhal betide,
Which ye ſhul heren, if ye wol abide.
O noble Ovide, ſoth ſayeſt thou, God wote,
What ſleight is it if love be long and hote,
That he n'ill find it out in ſom manere?
By Pyramus and Thiſbe may men lere;
Though they were kept ful long and ſtreit over all,
They ben accorded, rowning thurgh a wall,
Ther no wight coude han founden ſwiche a ſleighte.
But now to purpos; er that daies eighte
Were paſſed of the month of Juil, befill,
That January hath caught ſo gret a will,
Thurgh egging of his wif, him for to play
In his gardin, and no wight but they tway,
That in a morwe unto this May ſaid he;
Riſe up, my wif, my love, my lady free;
The turtles vois is herd, myn owen ſwete;
The winter is gon, with all his raines wete.
Come forth now with thin eyen columbine,
Wel fairer ben thy breſts than ony wine.
The gardin is encloſed all aboute;
Come forth, my white ſpouſe, for out of doute,
Thou haſt me wounded in myn herte, o wif:
No ſpot in thee n'as never in all thy lif.

Come forth, and let us taken our diſport,
I cheſe thee for my wif and my comfort.
Swiche olde lewed wordes uſed he.
On Damian a ſigne made ſhe,
That he ſhuld go before with his cliket.
This Damian hath opened the wiket,
And in he ſtert, and that in ſwiche manere,
That no wight might him neyther ſee ne here,
And ſtill he ſit under a buſh. Anon
This January, as blind as is a ſton,
With Maius in his hand, and no wight mo,
Into this freſhe gardin is ago,
And clapped to the wiket ſodenly.
Now, wif, quod he, here n'is but thou, and I,
That art the creature that I beſt love;
For by that lord that ſit in heven above,
I hadde lever dien on a knif,
Than thee offenden, dere trewe wif.
For Goddes ſake, thinke how I thee chees,
Not for no covetiſe douteles,
But only for the love I had to thee.
And though that I be old and may not ſee,
Beth to me trewe, and I wol tell you why;
Certes three thinges ſhal ye win therby;
Firſt love of Criſt, and to yourſelf honour,
And all min heritage, toun and tour.

I yeve

I yeve it you, maketh chartres as you leſt:
This ſhal be don to-morwe er ſonne reſt,
So wiſly God my ſoule bring to bliſſe;
I pray you on this covenant ye me kiſſe.
And though that I be jalous, wite me nought;
Ye ben ſo depe enprented in my thought,
That whan that I conſider your beautee,
And therwithall the unlikely elde of me,
I may not certes, though I ſhulde die,
Forbere to ben out of your compagnie
For veray love; this is withouten doute:
Now kiſſe me, wif, and let us rome aboute.
This freſhe May, whan ſhe thiſe wordes herd,
Benignely to January anſwerd,
But firſt and forward ſhe began to wepe:
I have, quod ſhe, a ſoule for to kepe
As wel as ye, and alſo min honour,
And of my wifhood thilke tendre flour,
Which that I have aſſured in your hond,
Whan that the preeſt to you my body bond:
Wherfore I wol anſwere in this manere,
With leve of you, myn owen lord ſo dere.
I pray to God that never daw that day,
That I ne ſterve, as foule as woman may,
If ever I do unto my kin that ſhame,
Or elles I empeire ſo my name,

That

That I be falſe; and if I do that lakke,
Do ſtripen me and put me in a ſakke,
And in the nexte river do me drenche:
I am a gentil woman, and no wenche.
Why ſpeke ye thus? but men ben ever untrewe,
And women han repreſe of you ay newe.
Ye con non other daliance, I leve,
But ſpeke to us as of untruſt and repreve.
And with that word ſhe ſaw wher Damian
Sat in the buſh, and coughen ſhe began;
And with hire finger a ſigne made ſhe,
That Damian ſhuld climbe up on a tre,
That charged was with fruit, and up he went:
For veraily he knew all hire entent,
And every ſigne that ſhe coude make,
Wel bet than January hire owen make.
For in a lettre ſhe had told him all
Of this matere, how that he werken ſhall.
And thus I let him ſitting in the pery,
And January and May roming ful mery.
Bright was the day, and blew the firmament;
Phebus of gold his ſtremes doun hath ſent
To gladen every flour with his warmneſſe;
He was that time in *Geminis*, I geſſe,
But litel fro his declination
Of Cancer, Joves exaltation.

And

And ſo befell in that bright morwe tide,
That in the gardin, on the ferther ſide,
Pluto, that is the king of Faerie,
And many a ladie in his compagnie
Folwing his wif, the quene Proſerpina,
Which that he ravisſhed out of Ethna,
While that ſhe gadred floures in the mede,
(In Claudian ye may the ſtory rede,
How that hire in his griſely carte he fette)
This king of Faerie adoun him ſette
Upon a benche of turves freſhe and grene,
And right anon thus ſaid he to his quene.

My wif, quod he, ther may no wight ſay nay,
The experience ſo preveth it every day,
The treſon which that woman doth to man.
Ten hundred thouſand ſtories tell I can
Notable of your untrouth and brotelneſſe.

O Salomon, richeſt of all richeſſe,
Fulfilled of ſapience, and worldly glorie,
Ful worthy ben thy wordes to memorie
To every wight, that wit and reſon can.
Thus praiſeth he the bountee yet of man;
Among a thouſand men yet fond I on,
But of all women fond I never non.
Thus ſaith this king, that knewe your wikkedneſſe;
And Jeſus, *Filius* Sirach, as I geſſe,

He

He ſpeketh of you but ſelden reverence.
A wilde fire, a corrupt peſtilence,
So fall upon your bodies yet to-night:
Ne ſee ye not this honourable knight?
Becauſe, alas! that he is blind and old,
His owen man ſhal make him cokewold.
Lo, wher he ſit, the lechour, in the tree.
Now wol I graunten of my majeſtee
Unto this olde blinde worthy knight,
That he ſhal have again his eyen ſight,
Whan that his wif wol don him vilanie;
Than ſhal he knowen all hire harlotrie,
Both in repreſe of hire and other mo.
Ye, ſire, quod Proſerpine, and wol ye ſo?
Now by my modre Ceres ſoule I ſwere,
That I ſhal yeve hire ſuffiſant anſwere,
And alle women after for hire ſake;
That though they ben in any gilt ytake,
With face bold they ſhul hemſelve excuſe,
And bere hem doun that wolden hem accuſe.
For lacke of anſwere, non of us ſhul dien.
Al had ye ſeen a thing with bothe youre eyen,
Yet ſhul we ſo viſage it hardely,
And wepe and ſwere and chiden ſubtilly,
That ye ſhul ben as lewed as ben gees.
What rekketh me of your auctoritees?

I wote

I wote wel that this Jewe, this Salomon,
Fond of us women fooles many on:
But though that he ne fond no good woman,
Ther hath yfonden many an other man
Women ful good, and trewe, and vertuous;
Witneſſe on hem that dwelte in Criſtes hous;
With martyrdom they preved hir conſtance.
The Romain geſtes maken remembrance
Of many a veray trewe wif alſo.
But, ſire, ne be not wroth, al be it ſo, 10160
Though that he ſaid he fond no good woman,
I pray you take the ſentence of the man:
He ment thus, That in ſoverain bountee
N'is non but God, no, nouther he ne ſhe.
Ey, for the veray God that n'is but on,
What maken ye ſo moche of Salomon?
What though he made a temple, Goddes hous?
What though he riche were and glorious?
So made he eke a temple of falſe goddes,
How might he don a thing that more forbode is? 10170
Parde as faire as ye his name emplaſtre,
He was a lechour, and an idolaſtre,
And in his elde he veray God forſoke.
And if that God ne hadde (as ſaith the boke)
Spared him for his fathers ſake, he ſholde
Han loſt his regne rather than he wolde.

I ſete

I ſete nat of all the vilanie,
That he of women wrote, a boterflie.
I am a woman, nedes moſte I ſpeke,
Or ſwell unto that time min herte breke.
For ſin he ſaid that we ben janglereſſes,
As ever mote I brouken hole my treſſes,
I ſhal nat ſparen for no curteſie
To ſpeke him harm, that ſayth us vilanie.
Dame, quod this Pluto, be no lenger wroth,
I yeve it up: but ſin I ſwore min oth,
That I wold graunten him his ſight again,
My word ſhal ſtand, that warne I you certain:
I am a king, it ſit me not to lie.
And I, quod ſhe, am quene of Faerie.
Hire anſwere ſhe ſhal han I undertake,
Let us no more wordes of it make.
Forſoth, quod he, I wol you not contrary.
Now let us turne again to January,
That in the gardin with his faire May
Singeth wel merier than the popingay:
You love I beſt, and ſhal, and other non.
So long about the alleyes is he gon,
Til he was comen again to thilke pery,
Wher as this Damian ſitteth ful mery
On high, among the freſhe leves grene.
This freſhe May, that is ſo bright and ſhene,

Gan

Gan for to ſike, and ſaid; alas my ſide!
Now, ſire, quod ſhe, for ought that may betide
I moſte have of the peres that I ſee,
Or I moſte die, ſo ſore longeth me
To eten of the ſmale peres grene:
Help for hire love that is of heven quene.
I tell you wel a woman in my plit
May have to fruit ſo gret an appetit,
That ſhe may dien, but ſhe of it have.
Alas! quod he, that I n'adde here a knave,
That coude climbe, alas! alas! (quod he)
For I am blinde. Ye, ſire, no force, quod ſhe;
But wold ye voucheſauf for Goddes ſake,
The pery in with your armes for to take,
(For wel I wot that ye miſtruſten me)
Than wold I climben wel ynough, (quod ſhe)
So I my fote might ſetten on your back.
Certes, ſaid he, therin ſhal be no lack,
Might I you helpen mith min herte blood.
He ſtoupeth doun, and on his back ſhe ſtood,
And caught hire by a twiſt, and up ſhe goth.
(Ladies, I pray you that ye be not wroth,
I can nat gloſe, I am a rude man:)
And ſodenly anon this Damian
Gan pullen up the ſmock, and in he throng.
And whan that Pluto ſaw this grete wrong,

To

To January he yaf again his ſight,
And made him ſee as wel as ever he might.
And whan he thus had caught his ſight again,
Ne was ther never man of thing ſo fain:
But on his wif his thought was ever mo.
Up to the tree he caſt his eyen two,
And ſaw how Damian his wife had dreſſed
In ſwiche manere, it may not ben expreſſed,
But if I wolde ſpeke uncurteiſly.
And up he yaf a roring and a cry,
As doth the mother whan the child ſhal die;
Out! helpe! alas! harow! he gan to cry;
O ſtronge lady ſtore, what doeſt thou?
And ſhe anſwered: ſire, what aileth you?
Have patience and reſon in your minde,
I have you holpen on both your eyen blinde.
Up peril of my ſoule, I ſhal nat lien,
As me was taught to helpen with your eyen,
Was nothing better for to make you ſee,
Than ſtrogle with a man upon a tree:
God wot, I did it in ful good entent.
Strogle! quod he, ye, algate in it went.
God yeve you both on ſhames deth to dien,
He ſwived thee, I ſaw it with min eyen,
And elles be I honged by the halſe.
Than is, quod ſhe, my medicine al falſe.

For certainly, if that ye mighten ſee,
Ye wold not ſay thiſe wordes unto me.
Ye have ſom glimſing, and no parfit ſight.
I ſee, quod he, as wel as ever I might,
(Thanked be God) with both min eyen two,
And by my feith me thought he did thee ſo.
Ye maſe, ye maſen, goode ſire, quod ſhe;
This thank have I for I have made you ſee:
Alas! quod ſhe, that ever I was ſo kind.
Now, dame, quod he, let al paſſe out of mind:
Come doun, my lefe, and if I have miſſaid,
God helpe me ſo, as I am evil appaid.
But by my fadres ſoule, I wende have ſein,
How that this Damian had by thee lein,
And that thy ſmock had lein upon his breſt.
Ye, ſire, quod ſhe, ye may wene as you leſt:
But, ſire, a man that waketh of his ſlepe,
He may not ſodenly wel taken kepe
Upon a thing, ne ſeen it parfitly,
Til that he be adawed verily.
Right ſo a man, that long hath blind ybe,
He may not ſodenly ſo wel yſee,
Firſt whan his ſight is newe comen agein,
As he that hath a day or two yſein.
Til that your ſight yſateled be a while,
Ther may ful many a ſighte you begile.

Beware, I pray you, for by heven king
Ful many a man weneth to ſee a thing,
And it is all another than it ſemeth:
He which that miſconceiveth oft miſdemeth.
And with that word ſhe lep doun fro the tree.
This January who is glad but he?
He kiſſeth hire, and clippeth hire ful oft,
And on hire wombe he ſtroketh hire ful ſoft;
And to his paleis home he hath hire lad.
Now, goode men, I pray you to be glad.
Thus endeth here my tale of Januarie,
God bleſſe us, and his moder Seinte Marie.

THE SQUIERES PROLOGUE.

By Goddes mercy, ſayde oure Hoſte tho,
Now ſwiche a wif I preie God kepe me fro.
Lo, ſwiche ſleightes and ſubtilitees
In women ben; for ay as beſy as bees
Ben they us ſely men for to deceive,
And from a ſothe wol they ever weive.
By this Marchantes tale it preveth wel.
But natheles, as trewe as any ſtele,
I have a wif, though that ſhe poure be;
But of hire tonge a labbing ſhrewe is ſhe;
And yet ſhe hath an hepe of vices mo.
Therof no force; let all ſwiche thinges go.

But wete ye what? in conſeil be it ſeyde,
Me reweth ſore I am unto hire teyde;
For and I ſhulde rekene every vice,
Which that ſhe hath, ywis I were to nice;
And cauſe why, it ſhulde reported be
And told to hire of ſom of this compagnie,
(Of whom it nedeth not for to declare,
Sin women connen utter ſwiche chaffare)
And eke my wit ſufficeth not therto
To tellen all; wherfore my tale is do.
Squier, come ner, if it youre wille be,
And ſay ſomwhat of love, for certes ye
Connen theron as moche as any man.
Nay, ſire, quod he, but ſwiche thing as I can
With hertly wille, for I wol not rebelle
Agein youre luſt, a tale wol I telle.
Have me excuſed if I ſpeke amis;
My wille is good; and lo, my tale is this.

THE SQUIERES TALE.

At Sarra, in the lond of Tartarie,
Ther dwelt a king that werreied Ruſſie,
Thurgh which ther died many a doughty man:
This noble king was cleped Cambuſcan,
Which in his time was of ſo gret renoun,
That ther n'as no wher in no regioun

So

So excellent a lord in alle thing:
Him lacked nought that longeth to a king,
As of the ſecte of which that he was borne.
He kept his lay to which he was yſworne,
And therto he was hardy, wiſe, and riche,
And pitous and juſt, and alway yliche;
Trewe of his word, benigne and honourable;
Of his corage as any centre ſtable;
Yong, freſh, and ſtrong, in armes deſirous,
As any bacheler of all his hous.
A faire perſon he was, and fortunate
And kept alway ſo wel real eſtat,
That ther n'as no wher ſwiche another man.
This noble king, this Tartre Cambuſcan,
Hadde two ſones by Elfeta his wif,
Of which the eldeſt ſone highte Algarſif,
That other was ycleped Camballo.
A doughter had this worthy king alſo,
That yongeſt was, and highte Canace:
But for to tellen you all hire beautee,
It lith not in my tonge, ne in my conning,
I dare not undertake ſo high a thing:
Min Engliſh eke is unſufficient,
It muſte ben a Rethor excellent,
That coude his colours longing for that art,
If he ſhuld hire deſcriven ony part;

I am non ſwiche, I mote ſpeke as I can.
And ſo befell, that whan this Cambuſcan
Hath twenty winter borne his diademe,
As he was wont fro yere to yere I deme,
He let the feſte of his nativitee
Don crien, thurghout Sarra his citee,
The laſt Idus of March, after the yere.
Phebus the ſonne ful jolif was and clere,
For he was nigh his exaltation
In Martes face, and in his manſion
In Aries, the colerike hote ſigne:
Ful luſty was the wether and benigne,
For which the foules again the ſonne ſhene,
What for the ſeſon and the yonge grene,
Ful loude ſongen hir affections:
Hem ſemed han getten hem protections
Again the ſwerd of winter kene and cold.
This Cambuſcan, of which I have you told,
In real veſtiments, ſit on his deis
With diademe, ful high in his paleis;
And holt his feſte ſo ſolempne and ſo riche,
That in this world ne was ther non it liche.
Of which if I ſhal tellen all the array,
Than wold it occupie a ſomers day;
And eke it nedeth not for to deviſe
At every cours the order of hir ſervice,

I wol

wol not tellen of hir ſtrange ſewes,
Ne of hir ſwannes, ne hir heronſewes.
Eke in that lond, as tellen knightes old,
Ther is ſom mete that is ful deintee hold,
That in this lond men recche of it ful ſmal:
Ther n'is no man that may reporten al.
I wol not tarien you, for it is prime,
And for it is no fruit, but loſſe of time,
Unto my purpoſe I wol have recours.
And ſo befell that after the thridde cours
While that this king ſit thus in his nobley,
Herking his miniſtralles hir thinges pley
Beforne him at his bord deliciouſly,
In at the halle dore al ſodenly
Ther came a knight upon a ſtede of bras,
And in his hond a brod mirrour of glas;
Upon his thombe he had of gold a ring,
And by his ſide a naked ſwerd hanging:
And up he rideth to the highe bord.
In all the halle ne was ther ſpoke a word,
For mervaille of this knight; him to behold
Ful beſily they waiten yong and old.
This ſtrange knight that come thus ſodenly
Al armed ſave his hed ful richely,
Salueth king and quene, and lordes alle
By order, as they ſaten in the halle,

With ſo high reverence and obſervance,
As wel in ſpeche as in his contenance,
That Gawain with his olde curteſie,
Though he were come agen out of faerie,
Ne coude him not amenden with a word.
And after this, beforn the highe bord
He with a manly vois ſayd his meſſage,
After the forme uſed in his langage,
Withouten vice of ſillable or of letter.
And for his tale ſhulde ſeme the better,
Accordant to his wordes was his chere,
As techeth art of ſpeche hem that it lere.
Al be it that I cannot floure his ſtile,
Ne cannot climben over ſo high a ſtile,
Yet ſay I this, as to comun entent,
Thus much amounteth all that ever he ment,
If it ſo be that I have it in mind.
He ſayd; The king of Arabie and of Inde,
My liege lord, on this ſolempne day
Saluëth you as he beſt can and may,
And ſendeth you in honour of your feſte
By me, that am al redy at your heſte,
This ſtede of bras, that eſily and wel
Can in the ſpace of a day naturel,
(This is to ſayn, in four and twenty houres)
Wher ſo you liſt, in drought or elles ſhoures,

Beren

Beren your body into every place,
To which your herte willeth for to pace,
Withouten wemme of you, thurgh foule or faire.
Or if you liſt to fleen as high in the aire,
As doth an egle, whan him liſt to ſore,
This ſame ſtede ſhal bere you evermore
Withouten harme, till ye be ther you leſt,
(Though that ye ſlepen on his back or reſt)
And turne again, with writhing of a pin.
He that it wrought, he coude many a gin;
He waited many a conſtellation,
Or he had don this operation,
And knew ful many a ſele and many a bond.
This mirrour eke, that I have in min hond,
Hath ſwiche a might, that men may in it ſee,
Whan ther ſhal falle ony adverſitee
Unto your regne, or to yourſelf alſo,
And openly, who is your frend or fo.
And over all this, if any lady bright
Hath ſet hire herte on any maner wight,
If he be falſe, ſhe ſhal his treſon ſee,
His newe love, and all his ſubtiltee
So openly, that ther ſhal nothing hide.
Wherfore again this luſty ſomer tide
This mirrour and this ring, that ye may ſe,
He hath ſent to my lady Canace,

Your

Your excellente doughter that is here.
The vertue of this ring, if ye wol here,
Is this, that if hire liſt it for to were
Upon hire thombe, or in hire purſe it bere,
Ther is no foule that fleeth under heven,
That ſhe ne ſhal wel underſtond his ſteven,
And know his mening openly and plaine,
And anſwere him in his langage again:
And every gras that groweth upon rote
She ſhal eke know, and whom it wol do bote,
All be his woundes never ſo depe and wide.
This naked ſwerd, that hangeth by my ſide,
Swiche vertue hath, that what man that it ſmite,
Thurghout his armure it wol kerve and bite,
Were it as thicke as is a braunched oke:
And what man that is wounded with the ſtroke
Shal never be hole, til that you liſt of grace
To ſtroken him with the platte in thilke place
Ther he is hurt; this is as much to ſain,
Ye moten with the platte ſwerd again
Stroken him in the wound, and it wol cloſe.
This is the veray ſoth withouten gloſe,
It failleth not, while it is in your hold.
And whan this knight hath thus his tale told,
He rideth out of halle, and doun he light:
His ſtede, which that ſhone as ſonne bright,

Stant

Stant in the court as ſtille as any ſton.
This knight is to his chambre ladde anon,
And is unarmed, and to the mete yſette.
Thiſe preſents ben ful richelich yfette,
This is to ſain, the ſwerd and the mirrour,
And borne anon into the highe tour,
With certain officers ordained therfore;
And unto Canace the ring is bore
Solempnely, ther ſhe ſat at the table;
But ſikerly, withouten any fable,
The hors of bras, that may not be remued;
It ſtant, as it were to the ground yglued;
Ther may no man out of the place it drive
For non engine, of windas, or polive:
And cauſe why, for they con not the craft,
And therfore in the place they han it laft,
Til that the knight hath taught him the manere
To voiden him, as ye ſhal after here.

Gret was the prees, that ſwarmed to and fro
To gauren on this hors that ſtondeth ſo:
For it ſo high was, and ſo brod and long,
So wel proportioned for to be ſtrong,
Right as it were a ſtede of Lumbardie;
Therwith ſo horſly, and ſo quik of eye,
As it a gentil Poileis courſer were:
For certes, fro his tayl unto his ere

Nature

Nature ne art ne coud him not amend
In no degree, as all the peple wend.
But evermore hir moſte wonder was,
How that it coude gon, and was of bras;
It was of faerie, as the peple ſemed.
Diverſe folk diverſely han demed;
As many heds, as many wittes ben.
They murmured, as doth a ſwarme of been,
And maden ſkilles after hir fantaſies,
Reherſing of the olde poetries,
And ſayd it was ylike the Pegaſee,
The hors that hadde winges for to flee,
Or elles it was the Grekes hors Sinon,
That broughte Troye to deſtruction,
As men moun in thiſe olde geſtes rede.
Min herte (quod on) is evermore in drede,
I trow ſom men of armes ben therin,
That ſhapen hem this citee for to win:
It were right good that al ſwiche thing were know.
Another rowned to his felaw low,
And ſayd, He lieth, for it is rather like
An apparence ymade by ſom magike,
As jogelours plaien at thiſe feſtes grete.
Of ſondry doutes thus they jangle and trete,
As lewed peple demen comunly
Of thinges, that ben made more ſubtilly,

Than

Than they can in hir lewedneſſe comprehende,
They demen gladly to the badder ende.
And ſom of hem wondred on the mirrour,
That born was up in to the maiſter tour,
How men mighte in it ſwiche thinges ſee.
Another anſwerd, and ſayd, it might wel be
Naturelly by compoſitions
Of angles, and of ſlie reflections;
And ſaide that in Rome was ſwiche on.
They ſpeke of Alhazen and Vitellon,
And Ariſtotle, that writen in hir lives
Of queinte mirrours, and of proſpectives,
As knowen they, that han hir bookes herd.
And other folk han wondred on the ſwerd,
That wolde percen thurghout every thing:
And fell in ſpeche of Telephus the king,
And of Achilles for his queinte ſpere,
For he coude with it bothe hele and dere,
Right in ſwiche wiſe as men may with the ſwerd,
Of which right now ye have yourſelven herd.
They ſpeken of ſondry harding of metall,
And ſpeken of medicines therwithall,
And how, and whan it ſhuld yharded be,
Which is unknow algates unto me.
Tho ſpeken they of Canacees ring,
And ſaiden all, that ſwiche a wonder thing

Of

Of craft of ringes herd they never non,
Save that he Moïſes and king Salomon
Hadden a name of conning in ſwiche art.
Thus ſain the peple, and drawen hem apart.
But natheles ſom ſaiden that it was
Wonder to maken of ferne aſhen glas,
And yet is glas nought like aſhen of ferne,
But for they han yknowen it ſo ferne,
Therfore ceſeth hir jangling and hir wonder.
As ſore wondren ſom on cauſe of thonder,
On ebbe and floud, on goſſomer, and on miſt,
And on all thing, til that the cauſe is wiſt.
Thus janglen they, and demen and deviſe,
Til that the king gan fro his bord ariſe.
Phebus hath left the angle meridional,
And yet aſcending was the beſte real,
The gentil Leon, with his Aldrian,
Whan that this Tartre king, this Cambuſcan,
Roſe from his bord, ther as he ſat ful hie:
Beforne him goth the loude minſtralcie,
Til he come to his chambre of parements,
Ther as they ſounden divers inſtruments,
That it is like an heven for to here.
Now dauncen luſty Venus children dere:
For in the fiſh hir lady ſat ful hie,
And loketh on hem with a frendly eye.

This

This noble king is ſet upon his trone;
This ſtraunge knight is fet to him ful ſone,
And on the daunce he goth with Canace.
Here is the revell and the jolitee,
That is not able a dull man to deviſe:
He muſt han knowen love and his ſerviſe,
And ben a feſtlich man, as freſh as May,
That ſhulde you deviſen ſwiche array.
Who coude tellen you the forme of daunces
So uncouth, and ſo freſhe contenaunces,
Swiche ſubtil lokings and diſſimulings,
For dred of jalous mennes apperceivings?
No man but Launcelot, and he is ded.
Therfore I paſſe over all this luſtyhed,
I ſay no more, but in this jolineſſe
I lete hem, til men to the ſouper hem dreſſe.
The ſteward bit the ſpices for to hie
And eke the win, in all this melodie;
The uſhers and the ſquierie ben gon,
The ſpices and the win is come anon:
They ete and drinke, and whan this had an end,
Unto the temple, as reſon was, they wend:
The ſervice don, they ſoupen all by day.
What nedeth you reherſen hir array?
Eche man wot wel, that at a kinges feſt
Is plentee, to the moſt and to the leſt,

And

And deintees mo than ben in my knowing.
At after ſouper goth this noble king
To ſeen this hors of bras, with all a route
Of lordes and of ladies him aboute.
Swiche wondring was ther on this hors of bras,
That ſin the gret aſſege of Troye was,
Ther as men wondred on an hors alſo,
Ne was ther ſwiche a wondring, as was tho.
But finally the king aſketh the knight
The vertue of this courſer, and the might,
And praied him to tell his governaunce.
This hors anon gan for to trip and daunce,
Whan that the knight laid hond up on his rein,
And ſaide, ſire. ther n'is no more to ſain,
But whan you liſt to riden any where,
Ye moten trill a pin, ſtant in his ere,
Which I ſhal tellen you betwixt us two,
Ye moten nempne him to what place alſo,
Or to what contree that you liſt to ride.
And whan ye come ther as you liſt abide,
Bid him deſcend, and trill another pin,
(For therin lieth the effect of all the gin)
And he wol doun deſcend and don your will,
And in that place he wol abiden ſtill:
Though al the world had the contrary ſwore,
He ſhal not thennes be drawe ne be bore.

Or

Or if you liſt to bid him thennes gon,
Trille this pin, and he wol vaniſh anon
Out of the ſight of every maner wight,
And come agen, be it by day or night,
Whan that you liſt to clepen him again
In ſwiche a guiſe, as I ſhal to you ſain
Betwixen you and me, and that ful ſone:
Ride whan you liſt, ther n'is no more to done.
Enfourmed whan the king was of the knight,
And hath conceived in his wit aright
The maner and the forme of all this thing,
Ful glad and blith, this noble doughty king
Repaireth to his revel, as beforne:
The bridel is in to the tour yborne,
And kept among his jewels lefe and dere:
The hors vaniſht, I n'ot in what manere,
Out of hir ſight, ye get no more of me:
But thus I lete in luſt and jolitee
This Cambuſcan his lordes feſteying,
Til that wel nigh the day began to ſpring.

Pars ſecunda.

The norice of digeſtion, the ſlepe,
Gan on hem winke, and bad hem taken kepe,
That mochel drinke, and labour wol have reſt:
And with a galping mouth hem all he keſt,

And ſaid, that it was time to lie adoun,
For blood was in his dominatioun:
Cheriſheth blood, natures frend, quod he.
They thanken him galping, by two by three;
And every wight gan drawe him to his reſt,
As ſlepe hem bade, they toke it for the beſt.
Hir dremes ſhul not now be told for me;
Ful were hir hedes of fumoſitee,
That cauſeth dreme, of which ther is no charge.
They ſlepen til that it was prime large,
The moſte part, but it were Canace;
She was ful meſurable, as women be.
For of hire father had ſhe take hire leve
To gon to reſt, ſone after it was eve;
Hire liſte not appalled for to be,
Nor on the morwe unfeſtliche for to ſee;
And ſlept hire firſte ſlepe, and than awoke.
For ſwiche a joye ſhe in hire herte toke
Both of hire queinte ring, and of hire mirrour,
That twenty time ſhe chaunged hire colour;
And in hire ſlepe right for the impreſſion
Of hire mirrour ſhe had a viſion.
Wherfore, or that the ſonne gan up glide,
She clepeth upon hire maiſtreſſe hire beſide,
And ſaide, that hire luſte for to ariſe.
Thiſe olde women, that ben gladly wiſe,

As

As is hire maiſtreſſe, anſwerd hire anon,
And ſaid; Madame, whider wol ye gon
Thus erly? for the folk ben all in reſt.
I wol, quod ſhe, ariſen (for me leſt
No longer for to ſlepe) and walken aboute.
Hire maiſtreſſe clepeth women a gret route,
And up they riſen, wel a ten or twelve;
Up riſeth freſhe Canace hireſelve,
As rody and bright, as the yonge ſonne,
That in the ram is foure degrees yronne; 10700
No higher was he, whan ſhe redy was;
And forth ſhe walketh eſily a pas,
Arrayed after the luſty ſeſon ſote
Lightely for to playe, and walken on fote,
Nought but with five or ſixe of hire meinie;
And in a trenche forth in the park goth ſhe.
The vapour, which that fro the erthe glode,
Maketh the ſonne to ſeme rody and brode:
But natheles, it was ſo faire a ſight,
That it made all hir hertes for to light, 10710
What for the ſeſon, and the morwening,
And for the foules that ſhe herde ſing.
For right anon ſhe wiſte what they ment
Right by hir ſong, and knew al hir entent.
The knotte, why that every tale is tolde,
If it be taried til the luſt be colde

Of hem, that han it herkened after yore,
The ſavour paſſeth ever lenger the more,
For fulſumneſſe of the prolixitee:
And by that ſame reſon thinketh me
I ſhuld unto the knotte condeſcende,
And maken of hire walking ſone an ende.

Amidde a tree for-dry, as white as chalk,
As Canace was playing in hire walk,
Ther ſat a faucon over hire hed ful hie,
That with a pitous vois ſo gan to crie,
That all the wood reſouned of hire cry,
And beten had hireſelf ſo pitouſly
With both hire winges, til the rede blood
Ran endelong the tree, ther as ſhe ſtood.
And ever in on alway ſhe cried and ſhright,
And with hire bek hireſelven ſhe ſo twight,
That ther n'is tigre, ne no cruel beſt,
That dwelleth other in wood, or in foreſt,
That n'olde han wept, if that he wepen coude,
For ſorwe of hire, ſhe ſhright alway ſo loude.

For ther was never yet no man on live,
If that he coude a faucon wel deſcrive,
That herde of ſwiche another of fayreneſſe
As wel of plumage, as of gentileſſe,
Of ſhape, of all that might yrekened be.
A faucon peregrine ſemed ſhe

Of

Of fremde lond, and ever as ſhe ſtood,
She ſwouned now and now for lack of blood,
Til wel neigh is ſhe fallen fro the tree.
This faire kinges doughter Canace,
That on hire finger bare the queinte ring,
Thurgh which ſhe underſtood wel every thing
That any foule may in his leden ſain,
And coude anſwere him in his leden again,
Hath underſtonden what this faucon ſeyd,
And wel neigh for the routhe almoſt ſhe deyd:
And to the tree ſhe goth ful haſtily,
And on this faucon loketh pitouſly,
And held hire lap abrode, for wel ſhe wiſt
The faucon muſte fallen from the twiſt
Whan that ſhe ſwouned next, for faute of blood.
A longe while to waiten hire ſhe ſtood,
Til at the laſt ſhe ſpake in this manere
Unto the hauk, as ye ſhul after here.
What is the cauſe, if it be for to tell,
That ye ben in this furial peine of hell?
Quod Canace unto this hauk above;
Is this for ſorwe of deth, or loſſe of love?
For as I trow, thiſe be the cauſes two,
That cauſen moſt a gentil herte wo.
Of other harme it nedeth not to ſpeke,
For ye yourſelf upon yourſelf awreke,

Which preveth wel, that other ire or drede
Mote ben encheſon of your cruel dede,
Sin that I ſe non other wight you chace.
For the love of God, as doth yourſelven grace:
Or what may be your helpe? for weſt ne eſt
Ne ſaw I never er now no brid ne beſt,
That ferde with himſelf ſo pitouſly.
Ye ſle me with your ſorwe verily,
I have of you ſo gret compaſſioun.
For Goddes love come fro the tree adoun;
And as I am a kinges doughter trewe,
If that I verily the cauſes knewe
Of your diſeſe, if it lay in my might,
I wold amend it, or that it were night,
As wiſly help me the gret God of kind.
And herbes ſhal I right ynough yfind,
To helen with your hurtes haſtily.
Tho ſhright this faucon yet more pitouſly
Than ever ſhe did, and fell to ground anon,
And lith aſwoune, as ded as lith a ſton,
Til Canace hath in hire lappe hire take,
Unto that time ſhe gan of ſwoune awake:
And after that ſhe out of ſwoune abraide,
Right in hire haukes leden thus ſhe ſayde.
That pitee renneth ſone in gentil herte
(Feling his ſimilitude in peines ſmerte)

Is proved alle day, as men may ſee,
As wel by werke as by auctoritee,
For gentil herte kitheth gentilleſſe.
I ſee wel, that ye have on my diſtreſſe
Compaſſion, my faire Canace,
Of veray womanly benignitee,
That nature in your principles hath ſet,
But for non hope for to fare the bet,
But for to obey unto your herte free,
And for to maken other yware by me,
As by the whelpe chaſtiſed is the leon,
Right for that cauſe and that concluſion,
While that I have a leiſer and a ſpace,
Min harme I wol confeſſen er I pace,
And ever while that on hire ſorwe told,
That other wept, as ſhe to water wold,
Til that the faucon bad hire to be ſtill,
And with a ſike right thus ſhe ſaid hire till.
Ther I was bred, (alas that ilke day!)
And foſtred in a roche of marble gray
So tendrely, that nothing ailed me.
I ne wiſt not what was adverſitee,
Til I coud flee ful high under the ſkie.
Tho dwelled a tercelet me faſte by,
That ſemed welle of alle gentilleſſe,
Al were he ful of treſon and falſeneſſe.

It was ſo wrapped under humble chere,
And under hew of trouth in ſwiche manere,
Under pleſance, and under beſy peine,
That no wight coud have wend he coude feine,
So depe in greyn he died his coloures.
Right as a ſerpent hideth him under floures,
Til he may ſee his time for to bite;
Right ſo this god of loves hypocrite
Doth ſo his ceremonies and obeiſance,
And kepeth in ſemblaunt alle his obſervance,
That ſouneth unto gentilleſſe of love.
As on a tombe is all the faire above,
And under is the corps, ſwiche as ye wote;
Swiche was this hypocrite both cold and hote,
And in this wiſe he ſerved his entent,
That, ſave the fend, non wiſte what he ment:
Til he ſo long had weped and complained,
And many a yere his ſervice to me fained,
Till that min herte, to pitous and to nice,
Al innocent of his crowned malice,
For-fered of his deth, as thoughte me,
Upon his othes and his ſeuretee,
Graunted him love, on this conditioun,
That everino min honour and renoun
Were ſaved, bothe privee and apert;
This is to ſay, that, after his deſert,

I yave

I yave him all min herte and all my thought,
(God wote, and he, that other wayes nought)
And toke his herte in chaunge of min for ay.
But ſoth is ſaid, gon ſithen is many a day,
A trewe wight and a theef thinken not on.
And whan he ſaw the thing ſo fer ygon,
That I had granted him fully my love,
In ſwiche a guiſe as I have ſaid above,
And yeven him my trewe herte as free
As he ſwore that he yaf his herte to me,
Anon this tigre, ful of doubleneſſe,
Fell on his knees with ſo gret humbleſſe,
With ſo high reverence, as by his chere,
So like a gentil lover of manere,
So raviſhed, as it ſemed, for the joye,
That never Jaſon, ne Paris of Troye,
Jaſon? certes, ne never other man,
Sin Lamech was, that alderfirſt began
To loven two, as writen folk beforne,
Ne never ſithen the firſt man was borne,
Ne coude man by twenty thouſand part
Contrefete the ſophimes of his art;
Ne were worthy to unbocle his galoche,
Ther doubleneſſe of faining ſhuld approche,
Ne coude ſo thanke a wight, as he did me.
His maner was an heven for to ſee

To

To any woman, were ſhe never ſo wiſe;
So painted he and kempt, at point deviſe,
As wel his wordes, as his contenance.
And I ſo loved him for his obeiſance,
And for the trouthe I demed in his herte,
That if ſo were that any thing him ſmerte,
Al were it never ſo lite, and I it wiſt,
Me thought I felt deth at myn herte twiſt.
And ſhortly, ſo ferforth this thing is went,
That my will was his willes inſtrument;
This is to ſay, my will obeied his will
In alle thing, as fer as reſon fill,
Keping the boundes of my worſhip ever:
Ne never had I thing ſo leſe, ne lever,
As him, God wot, ne never ſhal no mo.
This laſteth lenger than a yere or two,
That I ſuppoſed of him nought but good.
But finally, thus at the laſt it ſtood,
That fortune wolde that he muſte twin
Out of that place, which that I was in.
Wher me was wo, it is no queſtion;
I cannot make of it deſcription.
For o thing dare I tellen boldely,
I know what is the peine of deth therby,
Swiche harme I felt, for he ne might byleve.
So on a day of me he toke his leve,

So

So ſorweful eke, that I wend verailȳ,
That he had felt as mochel harme as I,
Whan that I herd him ſpeke, and ſaw his hewe.
But natheles, I thought he was ſo trewe,
And eke that he repairen ſhuld again
Within a litel while, ſoth to ſain,
And reſon wold eke that he muſte go
For his honour, as often happeth ſo,
That I made vertue of neceſſitee,
And toke it wel, ſin that it muſte be.
As I beſt might, I hid fro him my ſorwe,
And toke him by the hond, Seint John to borwe,
And ſaid him thus; lo, I am youres all,
Beth ſwiche as I have ben to you and ſhall.
What he anſwerd, it nedeth not reherſe;
Who can ſay bet than he, who can do werſe?
Whan he hath al wel ſaid, than hath he done.
Therfore behoveth him a ful long ſpone,
That ſhal ete with a fend; thus herd I ſay.
So at the laſt he muſte forth his way,
And forth he fleeth, til he come ther him leſt.
Whan it came him to purpos for to reſt,
I trow that he had thilke text in mind,
That alle thing repairing to his kind
Gladeth himſelf; thus ſain men as I geſſe:
Men loven of propre kind newefangelneſſe,

As

As briddes don, that men in cages fede.
For though thou night and day take of hem hede,
And ſtrew hir cage faire and ſoft as ſilke,
And give hem ſugre, hony, bred, and milke,
Yet right anon as that his dore is up,
He with his feet wol ſpurnen doun his cup,
And to the wood he wol, and wormes ete;
So newefangel ben they of hir mete,
And loven noveltees of propre kind;
No gentilleſſe of blood ne may hem bind.
So ferd this tercelet, alas the day!
Though he were gentil borne, and freſh, and gay,
And goodly for to ſeen, and humble, and free,
He ſaw upon a time a kite flee,
And ſodenly he loved this kite ſo,
That all his love is clene fro me ago:
And hath his trouthe falſed in this wiſe.
Thus hath the kite my love in hire ſervice,
And I am lorn withouten remedy.
And with that word this faucon gan to cry,
And ſwouneth eft in Canacees barme.
Gret was the ſorwe for that haukes harme,
That Canace and all hire women made;
They n'iſten how they might the faucon glade.
But Canace home bereth hire in hire lap,
And ſoftely in plaſtres gan hire wrap,

Ther as ſhe with hire bek had hurt hireſelve.
Now cannot Canace but herbes delve
Out of the ground, and maken ſalves newe
Of herbes precious and fine of hewe,
To helen with this hauk; fro day to night
She doth hire beſineſſe, and all hire might.
And by hire beddes hed ſhe made a mew,
And covered it with velouettes blew,
In ſigne of trouth, that is in woman ſene;
And all without the mew is peinted grene,
In which were peinted all thiſe falſe foules,
As ben thiſe tidifes, tercelettes, and owles;
And pies, on hem for to cry and chide,
Right for deſpit were peinted hem beſide.
Thus lete I Canace hire hauk keping.
I wol no more as now ſpeke of hire ring,
Til it come eft to purpos for to ſain,
How that this faucon gat hire love again
Repentant, as the ſtory telleth us,
By mediation of Camballus
The kinges ſone, of which that I you told.
But hennesforth I wol my proceſſe hold
To ſpeke of aventures, and of batailles,
That yet was never herd ſo gret mervailles.
Firſt wol I tellen you of Cambuſcan,
That in his time many a citee wan:

And

And after wol I ſpeke of Algarſif,
How that he wan Theodora to his wif,
For whom ful oft in gret peril he was,
Ne had he ben holpen by the hors of bras.
And after wol I ſpeke of Camballo,
That fought in liſtes with the brethren two
For Canace, er that he might hire winne,
And ther I left I wol again beginne.

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THE FRANKELEINES PROLOGUE.

In faith, Squier, thou haſt thee wel yquit
And gentilly, I preiſe wel thy wit,
Quod the Frankelein; conſidering thin youthe,
So felingly thou ſpekeſt, ſire, I aloue the
As to my dome, ther is non that is here,
Of eloquence that ſhal be thy pere,
If that thou live; God yeve thee goode chance,
And in vertue ſend thee continuance,
For of thy ſpeking I have gret deintee.
I have a ſone, and by the Trinitee
It were me lever than twenty pound worth lond,
Though it right now were fallen in my hond,
He were a man of ſwiche diſcretion,
As that ye ben: fie on poſſeſſion,

But if a man be vertuous withal.
I have my ſone ſnibbed, and yet ſhal,
For he to vertue liſteth not to entend,
But for to play at dis, and to diſpend,
And leſe all that he hath, is his uſage;
And he had lever talken with a page,
Than to commune with any gentil wight,
Ther he might leren gentilleſſe aright.
Straw for your gentilleſſe, quod our hoſte.
What? Frankelein, parde, ſire, wel thou woſt,
That eche of you mote tellen at the leſt
A tale or two, or breken his beheſt.
That know I wel, ſire, quod the Frankelein,
I pray you haveth me not in diſdein,
Though I to this man ſpeke a word or two.
Tell on thy tale, withouten wordes mo.
Gladly, ſire hoſte, quod he, I wol obey
Unto your will; now herkeneth what I ſey;
I wol you not contrarien in no wiſe,
As fer as that my wittes may ſuffice.
I pray to God that it may pleſen you,
Than wot I wel that it is good ynow.

Thiſe olde gentil Bretons in hir dayes
Of diverſe aventures maden layes,
Rimeyed in hir firſte Breton tonge:
Which layes with hir inſtruments they ſonge,

Or

Or elles redden hem for hir plesance,
And on of hem have I in remembrance,
Which I shal sayn with good wille as I can.
But, sires, because I am a borel man,
At my beginning first I you beseche
Have me excused of my rude speche.
I lerned never rhetorike certain;
Thing that I speke, it mote be bare and plain.
I slept never on the mount of Pernaso,
Ne lerned Marcus Tullius Cicero.
Colours ne know I non, withouten drede,
But swiche colours as growen in the mede,
Or elles swiche as men die with or peinte;
Colours of rhetorike ben to me queinte;
My spirit feleth not of swiche matere.
But if you lust my tale shul ye here.

THE FRANKELEINES TALE.

In Armorike, that called is Bretaigne,
Ther was a knight, that loved and did his peine
To serve a ladie in his beste wise;
And many a labour, many a gret emprise
He for his lady wrought, or she were wonne;
For she was on the faireste under sonne,
And eke therto comen of so high kinrede,
That wel unnethes durst this knight for drede

Tell

Tell hire his wo, his peine, and his diſtreſſe.
But at the laſt, ſhe for his worthineſſe,
And namely for his meke obeyſance,
Hath ſwiche a pitee caught of his penance,
That prively ſhe fell of his accord
To take him for hire huſbond and hire lord,
(Of ſwiche lordſhip as men han over hir wives)
And, for to lede the more in bliſſe hir lives,
Of his free will he ſwore hire as a knight,
That never in all his lif he day ne night
Ne ſhulde take upon him no maiſtrie
Agains hire will, ne kithe hire jalouſie,
But hire obey, and folwe hire will in al,
As any lover to his lady ſhal:
Save that the name of ſoverainetee
That wold he han for ſhame of his degree.
She thonked him, and with ful gret humbleſſe
She ſaide; ſire, ſin of your gentilleſſe
Ye profren me to have ſo large a reine,
Ne wolde God never betwix us tweine,
As in my gilt, were either werre or ſtrif:
Sire, I wol be your humble trewe wif,
Have here my trouth, till that myn herte breſte.
Thus ben they both in quiete and in reſte.
For o thing, ſires, ſaufly dare I ſeie,
That frendes everich other muſt obeie,

If they wol longe holden compagnie.
Love wol not be conſtreined by maiſtrie.
Whan maiſtrie cometh, the God of love anon
Beteth his winges, and farewel, he is gon.
Love is a thing, as any ſpirit free.
Women of kind deſiren libertee,
And not to be conſtreined as a thral;
And ſo don men, if ſothly I ſay ſhal.
Loke who that is moſt patient in love,
He is at his avantage all above.
Patience is an high vertue certain,
For it venquiſheth, as thiſe clerkes ſain,
Thinges that rigour never ſhulde atteine.
For every word men may not chide or pleine.
Lerneth to ſuffren, or, ſo mote I gon,
Ye ſhul it lerne whether ye wol or non.
For in this world certain no wight ther is,
That he ne doth or ſayth ſomtime amis.
Ire, ſikeneſſe, or conſtellation,
Win, wo, or changing of complexion,
Cauſeth ful oft to don amis or ſpeken:
On every wrong a man may not be wreken.
After the time muſt be temperance
To every wight that can of governance.
And therfore hath this worthy wiſe knight,
(To liven in eſe) ſuffrance hire behight;

And ſhe to him ful wiſly gan to ſwere,
That never ſhuld ther be defaute in here.
Here may men ſeen an humble wiſe accord:
Thus hath ſhe take hire ſervant and hire lord,
Servant in love, and lord in mariage.
Than was he both in lordſhip and ſervage?
Servage? nay, but in lordſhip al above,
Sin he hath both his lady and his love:
His lady certes, and his wif alſo,
The which that law of love accordeth to.
And whan he was in this proſperitee,
Home with his wif he goth to his contree,
Not fer fro Penmark, ther his dwelling was,
Wher as he liveth in bliſſe and in ſolas.
Who coude tell, but he had wedded be,
The joye, the eſe, and the proſperitee,
That is betwix an huſbond and his wif?
A yere and more laſteth this blisful lif,
Til that this knight, of which I ſpake of thus,
That of Cairrud was cleped Arviragus,
Shope him to gon and dwelle a yere or twaine
In Englelond, that cleped was eke Bretaigne,
To ſeke in armes worſhip and honour:
(For all his luſt he ſet in ſwiche labour)
And dwelte ther two yere; the book ſaith thus.
Now wol I ſtint of this Arviragus,

And ſpeke I wol of Dorigene his wif,
That loveth hire huſbond as hire hertes lif.
For his abſence wepeth ſhe and ſiketh,
As don thiſe noble wives whan hem liketh;
She morneth, waketh, waileth, faſteth, pleineth;
Deſir of his preſence hire ſo diſtraineth,
That all this wide world ſhe ſet at nought.
Hire frendes, which that knew hire hevy thought,
Comforten hire in all that ever they may;
They prechen hire, they telle hire night and day,
That cauſeles ſhe ſleth hireſelf, alas!
And every comfort poſſible in this cas
They don to hire, with all hir beſineſſe,
Al for to make hire leve hire hevineſſe.

By proceſſe, as ye knowen everich on,
Men mowe ſo longe graven in a ſton,
Til ſom figure therin emprented be:
So long han they comforted hire, til ſhe
Received hath, by hope and by reſon,
The emprenting of hir conſolation,
Thurgh which hire grete ſorwe gan aſſuage;
She may not alway duren in ſwiche rage.
And eke Arviragus, in all this care,
Hath ſent his lettres home of his welfare,
And that he wol come haſtily again,
Or elles had this ſorwe hire herte ſlain.

Hire

Hire frendes ſaw hire ſorwe gan to ſlake,
And preiden hire on knees for Goddes ſake
To come and romen in hir compagnie,
Away to driven hire derke fantaſie:
And finally ſhe granted that requeſt,
For wel ſhe ſaw that it was for the beſt.
Now ſtood hire caſtel faſte by the ſee,
And often with hire frendes walked ſhe,
Hire to diſporten on the bank an hie,
Wher as ſhe many a ſhip and barge ſie,
Sailing hir cours, wher as hem liſt to go.
But than was that a parcel of hire wo,
For to hireſelf ful oft, alas! ſaid ſhe,
Is ther no ſhip, of ſo many as I ſee,
Wol bringen home my lord? than were my herte
Al wariſhed of his bitter peines ſmerte.
Another time wold ſhe ſit and thinke,
And caſt her eyen dounward fro the brinke;
But whan ſhe ſaw the griſly rockes blake,
For veray fere ſo wold hire herte quake,
That on hire feet ſhe might hire not ſuſtene.
Than wold ſhe ſit adoun upon the grene,
And pitouſly into the ſee behold,
And ſay right thus, with careful ſikes cold,
Eterne God, that thurgh thy purveance
Ledeſt this world by certain governance,

In idel, as men ſain, ye nothing make.
But, lord, thiſe griſly fendly rockes blake,
That ſemen rather a foule confuſion
Of werk, than any faire creation
Of ſwiche a parfit wiſe God and ſtable,
Why han ye wrought this werk unreſonable?
For by this werk, north, ſouth, ne weſt, ne eſt,
Ther n'is yfoſtred man, ne brid, ne beſt:
It doth no good to my wit, but anoyeth.
See ye not, lord, how mankind it deſtroyeth?
An hundred thouſand bodies of mankind
Han rockes ſlain, al be they not in mind;
Which mankind is ſo faire part of thy werk,
Thou madeſt it like to thyn owen merk.
Than, ſemeth it, ye had a gret chertee
Toward mankind; but how than may it be,
That ye ſwiche menes make it to deſtroyen?
Which menes don no good, but ever anoyen.
I wote wel, clerkes wol ſain as hem leſt
By arguments, that all is for the beſt,
Though I ne can the cauſes nought yknow;
But thilke God that made the wind to blow,
As kepe my lord, this is my concluſion:
To clerkes lete I all diſputiſon:
But wolde God, that all thiſe rockes blake
Were ſonken into helle for his ſake.

Thiſe

Thiſe rockes ſlee min herte for the fere.
Thus wold ſhe ſay with many a pitous tere.
Hire frendes ſaw that it was no diſport
To romen by the ſee, but diſcomfort,
And ſhape hem for to plaien ſomwher elles.
They leden hire by rivers and by welles,
And eke in other places delitable;
They dancen and they play at ches and tables.
So on a day, right in the morwe tide,
Unto a gardin that was ther beſide,
In which that they had made hir ordinance
Of vitaille, and of other purveance,
They gon and plaie hem all the longe day:
And this was on the ſixte morwe of May,
Which May had peinted with his ſofte ſhoures
This gardin ful of leves and of floures:
And craft of mannes hond ſo curiouſly
Arrayed had this gardin trewely,
That never was ther gardin of ſwiche pris,
But if it were the veray paradis.
The odour of floures, and the freſhe ſight,
Wold han ymaked any herte light
That ever was born, but if to gret ſikeneſſe
Or to gret ſorwe held it in diſtreſſe,
So ful it was of beautee and pleſance.
And after dinner gonnen they to dance

And ſing alſo, ſauf Dorigene alone,
Which made alway hire complaint and hire mone,
For ſhe ne ſaw him on the dance go,
That was hire huſbond, and hire love alſo:
But natheles ſhe muſt a time abide,
And with good hope let hire ſorwe ſlide.
Upon this dance, amonges other men,
Danced a ſquier before Dorigen,
That freſher was and jolier of array,
As to my dome, than is the month of May.
He ſingeth, danceth, paſſing any man,
That is or was ſin that the world began;
Therwith he was, if men ſhuld him diſcrive,
On of the beſte faring men on live,
Yong, ſtrong, and vertuous, and riche, and wiſe,
And wel beloved, and holden in gret priſe.
And ſhortly, if the ſoth I tellen ſhal,
Unweting of this Dorigene at al,
This luſty ſquier, ſervant to Venus,
Which that ycleped was Aurelius,
Had loved hire beſt of any creature
Two yere and more, as was his aventure:
But never dorſt he tell hire his grevance,
Withouten cup he dranke all his penance.
He was diſpeired, nothing dorſt he ſay,
Sauf in his ſonges ſomwhat wold he wray

His

His wo, as in a general complaining;
He ſaid, he loved, and was beloved nothing.
Of ſwiche matere made he many layes,
Songes, complaintes, roundels, virelayes;
How that he dorſte not his ſorwe telle,
But languiſheth, as doth a furie in helle;
And die he muſt, he ſaid, as did Ecco
For Narciſſus, that dorſt not tell hire wo.
In other maner than ye here me ſay,
Ne dorſt he not to hire his wo bewray,
Sauf that paraventure ſomtime at dances,
Ther yonge folk kepen hir obſervances,
It may wel be he loked on hire face
In ſwiche a wiſe, as man that axeth grace,
But nothing wiſte ſhe of his entent.
Natheles it happed, or they thennes went,
Becauſe that he was hire neighebour,
And was a man of worſhip and honour,
Aud had yknowen him of time yore,
They fell in ſpeche, and forth ay more and more
Unto his purpos drow Aurelius;
And whan he ſaw his time, he ſaide thus.
Madame, quod he, by God that this world made,
So that I wiſt it might your herte glade,
I wold that day, that your Arviragus
Went over ſee, that I Aurelius

Had

Had went ther I ſhuld never come again;
For wel I wot my ſervice is in vain,
My guerdon n'is but breſting of min herte.
Madame, rueth upon my peines ſmerte,
For with a word ye may me ſleen or ſave.
Here at your feet God wold that I were grave.
I ne have as now no leiſer more to ſey:
Have mercy, ſwete, or ye wol do me dey.
She gan to loke upon Aurelius;
Is this your will (quod ſhe) and ſay ye thus?
Never erſt (quod ſhe) ne wiſt I what ye ment:
But now, Aurelie, I know your entent.
By thilke God that yaf me ſoule and lif,
Ne ſhal I never ben an untrewe wif
In word ne werk, as fer as I have wit,
I wol ben his to whom that I am knit:
Take this for final anſwer as of me,
But after that in play thus ſaide ſhe.
Aurelie, (quod ſhe) by high God above
Yet wol I granten you to ben your love,
(Sin I you ſee ſo pitouſly complaine)
Loke, what day that endelong Bretaigne
Ye remue all the rockes, ſton by ſton,
That they ne letten ſhip ne bote to gon,
I ſay, whan ye han made the coſt ſo clene
Of rockes, that ther n'is no ſton yſene,

Than

Than wol I love you beſt of any man,
Have here my trouth, in all that ever I can;
For wel I wote that it ſhal never betide.
Let ſwiche folie out of your herte glide.
What deintee ſhuld a man have in his lif
For to go love another mannes wif,
That hath hire body whan that ever him liketh?
Aurelius ful often ſore ſiketh;
Is ther non other grace in you? quod he.
No, by that lord, quod ſhe, that maked me.
Wo was Aurelie whan that he this herd,
And with a ſorweful herte he thus anſwerd.
Madame, quod he, this were an impoſſible.
Than moſte I die of ſoden deth horrible.
And with that word he turned him anon.
Tho come hire other frendes many on,
And in the alleyes romed up and doun,
And nothing wiſt of this concluſioun,
But ſodenly begonnen revel newe,
Til that the brighte ſonne had loſt his hewe,
For the orizont had reft the ſonne his light;
(This is as much to ſayn as it was night)
And home they gon in mirthe and in ſolas;
Sauf only wrecche Aurelius, alas!
He to his hous is gon with ſorweful herte.
He ſaith, he may not from his deth aſterte.

Him ſemeth, that he felt his herte cold.
Up to the heven his hondes gan he hold,
And on his knees bare he ſet him doun,
And in his raving ſaid his oriſoun.
For veray wo out of his wit he braide,
He n'iſte what he ſpake, but thus he ſaide;
With pitous herte his plaint hath he begonne
Unto the goddes, and firſt unto the ſonne.
He ſaid; Apollo, God and governour
Of every plante, herbe, tree, and flour,
That yeveſt after thy declination
To eche of hem his time and his ſeſon,
As that thin herbergh changeth low and hie;
Lord Phebus, caſt thy merciable eie
On wrecche Aurelie, which that am but lorne.
Lo, lord, my lady hath my deth yſworne
Withouten gilt, but thy benignitee
Upon my dedly herte have ſom pitee.
For wel I wot, lord Phebus, if you leſt,
Ye may me helpen, ſauf my lady, beſt.
Now voucheth ſauf, that I may you deviſe
How that I may be holpe and in what wiſe.
Your blisful ſuſter, Lucina the ſhene,
That of the ſee is chief goddeſſe and quene,
Though Neptunus have deitee in the ſee,
Yet emperice aboven him is ſhe:

Ye knowe wel, lord, that right as hire deſire
Is to be quiked and lighted of your fire,
For which ſhe folweth you ful beſily,
Right ſo the ſee deſireth naturelly
To folwen hire, as ſhe that is goddeſſe
Both in the ſee and rivers more and leſſe.
Wherfore, lord Phebus, this is my requeſt,
Do this miracle, or do min herte breſt;
That now next at this oppoſition,
Which in the ſigne ſhal be of the Leon,
As preyeth hire ſo gret a flood to bring,
That five fadome at the leſt it overſpring
The higheſt rock in Armorike Bretaigne,
And let this flood enduren yeres twaine:
Than certes to my lady may I ſay,
Holdeth your heſt, the rockes ben away.
Lord Phebus, this miracle doth for me,
Prey hire ſhe go no faſter cours than ye;
I ſay this, preyeth your ſuſter that ſhe go
No faſter cours than ye thiſe yeres two:
Than ſhal ſhe ben even at ful alway,
And ſpring-flood laſten bothe night and day.
And but ſhe vouchesauf in ſwiche manere
To graunten me my ſoveraine lady dere,
Prey hire to ſinken every rock adoun
Into hire owen derke regioun.

Under

Under the ground, ther Pluto dwelleth in,
Or nevermo ſhal I my lady win.
Thy temple in Delphos wol I barefoot ſeke.
Lord Phebus, ſee the teres on my cheke,
And on my peine have ſom compaſſioun.
And with that word, in ſorwe he fell adoun,
And longe time he lay forth in a trance.
His brother, which that knew of his penance,
Up caught him, and to bed he hath him brought.
Diſpeired in this turment and this thought
Let I this woful creature lie,
Cheſe he for me whether he wol live or die.
Arviragus with hele and gret honour
(As he that was of chevalrie the flour)
Is comen home, and other worthy men:
O, blisful art thou now, thou Dorigen,
That haſt thy luſty huſbond in thin armes,
The freſhe knight, the worthy man of armes,
That loveth thee, as his owen hertes lif:
Nothing liſt him to be imaginatif,
If any wight had ſpoke, while he was oute,
To hire of love; he had of that no doute;
He not entendeth to no ſwiche matere,
But danceth, juſteth, and maketh mery chere.
And thus in joye and bliſſe I let hem dwell,
And of the ſike Aurelius wol I tell.

In

In langour and in turment furious
Two yere and more lay wrecche Aurelius,
Er any foot on erthe he mighte gon;
Ne comfort in this time ne had he non,
Sauf of his brother, which that was a clerk.
He knew of all this wo and all this werk;
For to non other creature certain
Of this matere he dorſte no word ſain;
Under his breſt he bare it more ſecree,
Than ever did Pamphilus for Galathee.
His breſt was hole withouten for to ſeen,
But in his herte ay was the arwe kene,
And wel ye knowe that of a ſurſanure
In ſurgerie is perilous the cure,
But men might touch the arwe or come therby.
His brother wepeth and waileth prively,
Til at the laſt him fell in remembrance,
That while he was at Orleaunce in France,
As yonge clerkes, that ben likerous
To reden artes that ben curious,
Seken in every halke and every herne
Particuler ſciences for to lerne,
He him remembred, that upon a day
At Orleaunce in ſtudie a book he ſay
Of Magike naturel, which his felaw,
That was that time a bacheler of law,

Al were he ther to lerne another craft,
Had prively upon his deſk ylaft;
Which book ſpake moche of operations
Touching the eight and twenty manſions
That longen to the Mone, and ſwiche folie
As in our dayes n'is not worth a flie:
For holy cherches feith, in our beleve,
Ne ſuffreth non illuſion us to greve.
And whan this book was in his remembrance,
Anon for joye his herte gan to dance,
And to himſelf he ſaied prively;
My brother ſhal be wariſhed haſtily:
For I am ſiker that ther be ſciences,
By which men maken divers apparences,
Swiche as thiſe ſubtil tregetoures play.
For oft at feſtes have I wel herd ſay,
That tregetoures, within an halle large,
Have made come in a water and a barge,
And in the halle rowen up and doun.
Somtime hath ſemed come a grim leoun,
And ſomtime floures ſpring as in a mede,
Somtime a vine, and grapes white and rede,
Somtime a caſtel al of lime and ſton,
And whan hem liketh voideth it anon:
Thus ſemeth it to every mannes ſight.
Now than conclude I thus, if that I might

At Orleaunce ſom olde felaw find,
That hath thiſe Mones manſions in mind,
Or other Magike naturel above,
He ſhuld wel make my brother have his love.
For with an apparence a clerk may make
To mannes ſight, that all the rockes blake
Of Bretaigne were yvoided everich on,
And ſhippes by the brinke comen and gon,
And in ſwiche forme endure a day or two:
Than were my brother warifhed of his wo,
Than muſt ſhe nedes holden hire beheſt,
Or elles he ſhal ſhame hire at the leſt.
What ſhuld I make a lenger tale of this?
Unto his brothers bed he comen is,
And ſwiche comfort he yaf him, for to gon
To Orleaunce, that he up ſtert anon,
And on his way forthward than is he fare,
In hope for to ben liſſed of his care.
Whan they were come almoſt to that citee,
But if it were a two furlong or three,
A yonge clerk roming by himſelf they mette,
Which that in Latine thriftily hem grette.
And after that he ſayd a wonder thing;
I know, quod he, the cauſe of your coming:
And or they forther any foote went,
He told hem all that was in hir entent.

This Breton clerk him axed of felawes,
The which he had yknowen in olde dawes,
And he anſwered him that they dede were,
For which he wept ful often many a tere.
Doun of his hors Aurelius light anon,
And forth with this magicien is gon
Home to his hous, and made hem wel at eſe:
Hem lacked no vitaille that might hem pleſe.
So wel arraied hous as ther was on,
Aurelius in his lif ſaw never non.
He ſhewed him, or they went to ſoupere,
Foreſtes, parkes ful of wilde dere.
Ther ſaw he hartes with hir hornes hie,
The greteſt that were ever ſeen with eie.
He ſaw of hem an hundred ſlain with houndes,
And ſom with arwes blede of bitter woundes.
He ſaw, whan voided were the wilde dere,
Thiſe fauconers upon a faire rivere,
That with hir haukes han the heron ſlain.
Tho ſaw he knightes juſten in a plain.
And after this he did him ſwiche pleſance,
That he him ſhewed his lady on a dance,
On which himſelven danced, as him thought.
And whan this maiſter, that this magike wrought,
Saw it was time, he clapped his hondes two,
And farewel, al the revel is ago.

And

And yet remued they never out of the hous,
While they ſaw all thiſe ſightes merveillous;
But in his ſtudie, ther his bookes be,
They ſaten ſtill, and no wight but they three.
To him this maiſter called his ſquier,
And ſayd him thus, may we go to ſouper?
Almoſt an houre it is, I undertake,
Sin I you bade our ſouper for to make,
Whan that thiſe worthy men wenten with me
Into my ſtudie, ther my bookes be.
Sire, quod this ſquier, whan it liketh you,
It is al redy, though ye wol right now.
Go we than ſoupe, quod he, as for the beſt,
Thiſe amorous folk ſomtime moſte han reſt.
At after ſouper fell they in tretee
What ſumme ſhuld this maiſters guerdon be,
To remue all the rockes of Bretaigne,
And eke from Gerounde to the mouth of Saine.
He made it ſtrange, and ſwore, ſo God him ſave,
Leſſe than a thouſand pound he wold not have,
Ne gladly for that ſumme he wold not gon.
Aurelius with blisful herte anon
Anſwered thus; fie on a thouſand pound:
This wide world, which that men ſayn is round,
I wold it yeve, if I were lord of it.
This bargaine is ful drive, for we ben knit;

Ye ſhul be paied trewely by my trouth.
But loketh, for non negligence or ſlouth,
Ye tarie us here no lenger than to morwe.
Nay, quod this clerk, have here my faith to borwe.
To bed is gon Aurelius whan him leſt,
And wel nigh all that night he had his reſt,
What for his labour, and his hope of bliſſe,
His woful herte of penance had a liſſe.
Upon the morwe whan that it was day,
To Bretaigne token they the righte way,
Aurelie, and this magicien him beſide,
And ben deſcended ther they wold abide:
And this was, as the bookes me remember,
The colde froſty ſeſon of December.
Phebus waxe old, and hewed like laton,
That in his hote declination
Shone as the burned gold, with ſtremes bright;
But now in Capricorne adoun he light,
Wher as he ſhone ful pale, I dare wel ſain.
The bitter froſtes with the ſleet and rain
Deſtroyed han the grene in every yerd.
Janus ſit by the fire with double berd,
And drinketh of his bugle horn the wine:
Beforn him ſtant braune of the tuſked ſwine,
And *nowel* crieth every luſty man.
Aurelius in all that ever he can,

Doth

Doth to his maiſter chere and reverence,
And praieth him to don his diligence
To bringen him out of his peines ſmerte,
Or with a ſwerd that he wold ſlit his herte.
This ſotil clerk ſwiche routh hath on this man,
That night and day he ſpedeth him, that he can,
To wait a time of his concluſion;
This is to ſayn, to make illuſion,
By ſwiche an apparence or joglerie,
(I can no termes of Aſtrologie)
That ſhe and every wight ſhuld wene and ſay,
That of Bretaigne the rockes were away,
Or elles they were ſonken under ground.
So at the laſt he hath his time yfound
To make his japes and his wretchedneſſe
Of ſwiche a ſuperſtitious curſedneſſe.
His tables Toletanes forth he brought
Ful wel corrected, that ther lacked nought,
Nother his collect, ne his expans yeres,
Nother his rotes, ne his other geres,
As ben his centres, and his argumentes,
And his proportionel convenientes
For his equations in every thing.
And by his eighte ſperes in his werking,
He knew ful wel how fer Alnath was ſhove
Fro the hed of thilke fix Aries above,

That in the ninthe ſpere conſidered is.
Ful ſotilly he calculed all this.
Whan he had found his firſte manſion,
He knew the remenant by proportion;
And knew the riſing of his Mone wel,
And in whos face, and terme, and every del;
And knew ful wel the mones manſion
Accordant to his operation;
And knew alſo his other obſervances,
For ſwiche illuſions and ſwiche meſchances,
As hethen folk uſed in thilke daies.
For which no lenger maketh he delaies,
But thurgh his magike, for a day or tway,
It ſemed all the rockes were away.
Aurelius, which that deſpeired is,
Whether he ſhal han his love, or fare amis,
Awaiteth night and day on this miracle:
And whan he knew that ther was non obſtacle,
That voided were thiſe rockes everich on,
Doun to his maiſters feet he fell anon,
And ſayd; I woful wretch Aurelius,
Thanke you, my lord, and lady min Venus,
That me han holpen fro my cares cold.
And to the temple his way forth hath he hold,
Theras he knew he ſhuld his lady ſee.
And whan he ſaw his time, anon right he

With

With dredful herte and with ful humble chere
Salued hath his ſoveraine lady dere.
My rightful lady, quod this woful man,
Whom I moſt drede, and love, as I beſt can,
And lotheſt were of all this world diſpleſe,
N'ere it that I for you have ſwiche diſeſe,
That I muſt die here at your foot anon,
Nought wold I tell how me is wo begon.
But certes other muſt I die or plaine;
Ye ſle me gilteles for veray peine.
But of my deth though that ye han no routh,
Aviſeth you, or that ye breke your trouth:
Repenteth you for thilke God above,
Or ye me ſle, becauſe that I you love.
For, madame, wel ye wote what ye have hight;
Not that I chalenge any thing of right
Of you, my ſoveraine lady, but of grace;
But in a gardin yond, in ſwiche a place,
Ye wote right wel what ye behighten me,
And in myn hond your trouthe plighten ye,
To love me beſt; God wote ye ſaied ſo,
Although that I unworthy be therto;
Madame, I ſpeke it for the honour of you,
More than to ſave my hertes lif right now:
I have don ſo as ye commanded me,
And if ye voucheſauf, ye may go ſee.

Doth as you liſt, have your beheſt in mind,
For quick or ded, right ther ye ſhul me find:
In you lith all to do me live or dey,
But wel I wote the rockes ben awey.
He taketh his leve, and ſhe aſtonied ſtood;
In all hire face n'as o drope of blood:
She wened never han come in ſwiche a trappe.
Alas! quod ſhe, that ever this ſhuld happe!
For wend I never by poſſibilitee,
That ſwiche a monſtre or mervaille might be;
It is again the proceſſe of nature.
And home ſhe goth a ſorweful creature,
For veray fere unnethes may ſhe go,
She wepeth, waileth all a day or two,
And ſwouneth, that it routhe was to ſee;
But why it was, to no wight tolde ſhe,
For out of toun was gon Arviragus.
But to hireſelf ſhe ſpake, and ſaied thus,
With face pale, and with ful ſory chere,
In hire complaint, as ye ſhul after here.
Alas! quod ſhe, on thee, fortune, I plain,
That unware haſt me wrapped in thy chain:
Fro which to eſcapen, wote I no ſoccour,
Sauf only deth, or elles diſhonour:
On of thiſe two behoveth me to cheſe.
But natheles, yet had I lever leſe

My

My lif, than of my body have a ſhame,
Or know myſelven falſe, or leſe my name;
And with my deth I may be quit ywis.
Hath ther not many a noble wif or this,
And many a maid yſlaine hireſelf, alas!
Rather than with hire body don treſpas?
Yes certes; lo, thiſe ſtories bere witneſſe.
Whan thirty tyrants ful of curſedneſſe
Had ſlain Phidon in Athens at the feſt,
They commanded his doughtren for to arreſt,
And bringen hem beforne hem in deſpit
Al naked, to fulfill hir foule delit;
And in hir fadres blood they made hem dance
Upon the pavement, God yeve hem meſchance.
For which thiſe woful maidens ful of drede,
Rather than they wold leſe hir maidenhede,
They prively ben ſtert into a welle,
And dreint hemſelven, as the bookes telle.
They of Meſſene let enquere and ſeke
Of Lacedomie fifty maidens eke,
On which they wolden don hir lecherie:
But ther was non of all that compagnie
That ſhe n'as ſlaine, and with a glad entent
Chees rather for to dien, than aſſent
To ben oppreſſed of hire maidenhede.
Why ſhuld I than to dien ben in drede?

Lo eke the tyrant Ariſtoclides,
That loved a maid hight Stimphalides,
Whan that hire father ſlaine was on a night,
Unto Dianes temple goth ſhe right,
And hente the image in hire handes two,
Fro which image wold ſhe never go,
No wight hire handes might of it arrace,
Til ſhe was ſlaine right in the ſelve place.

Now ſin that maidens hadden ſwiche deſpit
To be defouled with mannes foule delit,
Wel ought a wif rather hireſelven ſle,
Than be defouled, as it thinketh me.

What ſhal I ſayn of Haſdrubales wif,
That at Cartage beraft hireſelf hire lif?
For whan ſhe ſaw that Romains wan the toun,
She toke hire children all, and ſkipt adoun
Into the fire, and chees rather to die,
Than any Romain did hire vilanie.

Hath not Lucrece yſlaine hireſelf, alas!
At Rome, whan that ſhe oppreſſed was
Of Tarquine? for hire thought it was a ſhame
To liven, whan ſhe hadde loſt hire name.

The ſeven maidens of Mileſie alſo
Han ſlaine hemſelf for veray drede and wo,
Rather than folk of Gaule hem ſhuld oppreſſe.

Mo than a thouſand ſtories, as I geſſe,

Coude

Coude I now tell as touching this matere.
Whan Abradate was ſlain, his wif ſo dere
Hireſelven ſlow, and let hire blood to glide
In Abradates woundes, depe and wide,
And ſayd, my body at the leſte way
Ther ſhal no wight defoulen, if I may.
What ſhuld I mo enſamples hereof ſain?
Sin that ſo many han hemſelven ſlain
Wel rather than they wold defouled be,
I wol conclude that it is bet for me
To ſle myſelf than be defouled thus.
I wol be trewe unto Arviragus,
Or elles ſle myſelf in ſome manere,
As did Demotiones doughter dere,
Becauſe ſhe wolde not defouled be.
O Sedaſus, it is ful gret pitee
To reden how thy doughtren died, alas!
That ſlowe hemſelven for ſwiche maner cas.
As gret a pitee was it or wel more,
The Theban maiden, that for Nichanore
Hireſelven ſlow, right for ſwiche manere wo.
Another Theban mayden did right ſo,
For on of Macedoine, had hire oppreſſed,
She with hire deth hire maidenhed redreſſed.
What ſhal I ſain of Nicerates wif,
That for ſwiche cas beraft hireſelf hire lif?

How trewe was eke to Alcibiades
His love, that for to dien rather chees,
Than for to ſuffre his body unburied be?
Lo, which a wif was Alceſte eke? (quod ſhe)
What ſayth Homere of good Penelope?
All Grece knoweth of hire chaſtitee.
Parde of Laodomia is written thus,
That whan at Troye was ſlain Protheſilaus,
No lenger wolde ſhe live after his day.
The ſame of noble Portia tell I may;
Withouten Brutus coude ſhe not live,
To whom ſhe had all hol hire herte yeve.
The parfit wifhood of Artemiſie
Honoured is thurghout all Barbarie.
O Teuta quenè, thy wifly chaſtitee
To alle wives may a mirrour be.
Thus plained Dorigene a day or twey,
Purpoſing ever that ſhe wolde dey;
But natheles upon the thridde night
Home came Arviragus, the worthy knight,
And axed hire why that ſhe weep ſo ſore:
And ſhe gan wepen ever lenger the more.
Alas, quod ſhe, that ever I was yborne!
Thus have I ſaid, (quod ſhe) thus have I ſworne.
And told him all, as ye have herd before;
It nedeth not reherſe it you no more.

This

This huſbond with glad chere in frendly wiſe
Anſwerd and ſayd, as I ſhal you deviſe.
Is ther ought elles, Dorigene, but this?
Nay, nay, quod ſhe, God helpe me ſo, as wis
This is to much, and it were Goddes will.
Ye, wif, quod he, let ſlepen that is ſtill,
It may be wel paraventure yet to-day.
Ye ſhal your trouthe holden by my fay.
For God ſo wiſly have mercy on me,
I had wel lever ſtiked for to be,
For veray love which that I to you have,
But if ye ſhuld your trouthe kepe and ſave.
Trouth is the hieſt thing that man may kepe.
But with that word he braſt anon to wepe,
And ſayd; I you forbede on peine of deth,
That never while you laſteth lif or breth,
To no wight tell ye this miſaventure.
As I may beſt I wol my wo endure.
Ne make no contenance of hevineſſe,
That folk of you may demen harme or geſſe.
And forth he cleped a ſquier and a maid.
Goth forth anon with Dorigene, he ſaid,
And bringeth hire to ſwiche a place anon.
They take hir leve, and on hir way they gon:
But they ne wiſten why ſhe thider went,
She n'olde no wight tellen hire entent.

This ſquier, which that highte Aurelius,
On Dorigene that was ſo amorous,
Of aventure happed hire to mete
Amid the toun, right in the quikkeſt ſtrete,
As ſhe was boun to go the way forthright
Toward the gardin, ther as ſhe had hight.
And he was to the gardinward alſo;
For wel he ſpied whan ſhe wolde go
Out of hire hous, to any maner place:
But thus they met of aventure or grace,
And he ſalueth hire with glad entent,
And axeth of hire whiderward ſhe went.
And ſhe anſwered, half as ſhe were mad,
Unto the gardin, as myn huſbond bad,
My trouthe for to hold, alas! alas!
Aurelius gan wondren on this cas,
And in his herte had gret compaſſion
Of hire, and of hire lamentation,
And of Arviragus the worthy knight,
That bad hire holden all that ſhe had hight,
So loth him was his wif ſhuld breke hire trouthe.
And in his herte he caught of it gret routhe,
Conſidering the beſt on every ſide,
That fro his luſt yet were him lever abide,
Than do ſo high a cherliſh wretchedneſſe
Ageins fraunchiſe, and alle gentilleſſe;

For

For which in fewe wordes ſayd he thus.
Madame, ſay to your lord Arviragus,
That ſin I ſee the grete gentilleſſe
Of him, and eke I ſee wel your diſtreſſe, [routhe)
That him were lever have ſhame (and that were
Than ye to me ſhuld breken thus your trouthe,
I hadde wel lever ever to ſuffren wo,
Than to depart the love betwix you two.
I you releſe, madame, into your hond
Quit every ſeurement and every bond,
That ye han made to me, as herebeforne,
Sin thilke time that ye were yborne.
Have here my trouthe, I ſhal you never repreve
Of no beheſt, and here I take my leve,
As of the treweſt and the beſte wif,
That ever yet I knew in all my lif.
But every wif beware of hire beheſt;
On Dorigene remembreth at the leſt.
Thus can a ſquier don a gentil dede,
As wel as can a knight, withouten drede.
She thanketh him upon hire knees bare,
And home unto hire huſbond is ſhe fare,
And told him all, as ye han herd me ſayd;
And, truſteth me, he was ſo wel apayd,
That it were impoſſible me to write.
What ſhuld I lenger of this cas endite?

Arviragus

Arviragus and Dorigene his wif
In ſoveraine bliſſe leden forth hir lif,
Never eft ne was ther anger hem betwene;
He cheriſhed hire as though ſhe were a quene,
And ſhe was to him trewe for evermore:
Of thiſe two folk ye get of me no more.
  Aurelius, that his coſt hath all forlorne,
Curſeth the time, that ever he was borne.
Alas! quod he, alas that I behight
Of pured gold a thouſand pound of wight
Unto this philoſophre! how ſhal I do?
I ſee no more, but that I am fordo.
Min heritage mote I nedes ſell,
And ben a begger, here I n'ill not dwell,
And ſhamen all my kinrede in this place,
But I of him may geten better grace.
But natheles I wol of him aſſay
At certain daies yere by yere to pay,
And thanke him of his grete curteſie.
My trouthe wol I kepe, I wol not lie.
  With herte ſore he goth unto his cofre,
And broughte gold unto this philoſophre,
The value of five hundred pound I geſſe,
And him beſecheth of his gentilleſſe
To graunt him daies of the remenaunt,
And ſayde; maiſter, I dare wel make avaunt,

I failled never of my trouthe as yet.
For ſikerly my dette ſhal be quit
Towardes you, how ſo that ever I fare
To gon a begging in my kirtle bare:
But wold ye vouchen ſauf upon ſeurtee
Two yere or three for to reſpiten me,
Than were I wel, for elles mote I ſell
Min heritage, ther is no more to tell.
This Philoſophre ſobrely anſwerd,
And ſaied thus, whan he thiſe wordes herd;
Have I not holden covenant to thee?
Yes certes, wel and trewely, quod he.
Haſt thou not had thy lady as thee liketh?
No, no, quod he, and ſorwefully he ſiketh:
What was the cauſe? tell me if thou can.
Aurelius his tale anon began,
And told him all as ye han herd before,
It nedeth not reherſe it any more.
He ſayd, Arviragus of gentilleſſe
Had lever die in ſorwe and in diſtreſſe,
Than that his wif were of hire trouthe fals.
The ſorwe of Dorigene he told him als,
How loth hire was to ben a wicked wif,
And that ſhe lever had loſt that day hire lif;
And that her trouth ſhe ſwore thurgh innocence;
She never erſt hadde herd ſpeke of apparence:

That made me han of hire ſo gret pitee,
And right as freely as he ſent hire to me,
As freely ſent I hire to him again:
This is all and ſom, ther n'is no more to ſain.
The Philoſophre anſwerd; leve brother,
Everich of you did gentilly to other:
Thou art a ſquier, and he is a knight,
But God forbede for his blisful might,
But if a clerk coud don a gentil dede
As wel as any of you, it is no drede.
Sire, I releſe thee thy thouſand pound,
As thou right now were crope out of the ground,
Ne never er now ne haddeſt knowen me.
For, ſire, I wol not take a peny of thee
For all my craft, ne nought for my travaille:
Thou haſt ypaied wel for my vitaille.
It is ynough, and farewel, have good day.
And toke his hors, and forth he goth his way.
Lordings, this queſtion wold I axen now,
Which was the moſte free, as thinketh you?
Now telleth me, or that ye further wende.
I can no more, my tale is at an ende.

THE DOCTOURES PROLOGUE.

Ye, let that paſſen, quod oure Hoſte, as now.
Sire Doctour of Phyſike, I prey you,

Tell

Tell us a tale of ſom honeſt matere.
It ſhal be don, if that ye wol it here,
Said this doctour, and his tale began anon.
Now, good men, quod he, herkeneth everich on.

THE DOCTOURES TALE.

Ther was, as telleth Titus Livius,
A knight, that cleped was Virginius,
Fulfilled of honour and worthineſſe,
And ſtrong of frendes, and of gret richeſſe.
This knight a doughter hadde by his wif.
No children had he mo in all his lif.
Faire was this maid in excellent beautee
Aboven every wight that man may ſee:
For nature hath with ſoveraine diligence
Yformed hire in ſo gret excellence,
As though ſhe wolde ſayn, lo, I nature,
Thus can I forme and peint a creature,
Whan that me liſt; who can me contrefete?
Pigmalion? not, though he ay forge and bete,
Or grave, or peinte: for I dare wel ſain,
Apelles, Xeuxis, ſhulden werche in vain,
Other to grave, or peinte, or forge, or bete,
If they preſumed me to contrefete.
For he that is the former principal,
Hath maked me his vicaire general

To forme and peinten erthly creatures
Right as me liſt, and eche thing in my cure is
Under the mone, that may wane and waxe.
And for my werk right nothing wol I axe;
My lord and I ben ful of on accord.
I made hire to the worſhip of my lord;
So do I all min other creatures,
What colour that they han, or what figures.
Thus ſemeth me that nature wolde ſay.
This maid of age twelf yere was and tway,
In which that nature hadde ſwiche delit.
For right as ſhe can peint a lily whit
And red a roſe, right with ſwiche peinture
She peinted hath this noble creature
Er ſhe was borne, upon hire limmes free,
Wheras by right ſwiche colours ſhulden be:
And Phebus died hath hire treſſes grete,
Like to the ſtremes of his burned hete.
And if that excellent were hire beautee,
A thouſand fold more vertuous was ſhe.
In hire ne lacked no condition,
That is to preiſe, as by diſcretion.
As wel in goſt as body, chaſt was ſhe:
For which ſhe floured in virginitee,
With all humilitee and abſtinence,
With all attemperance and patience,

With

With meſure eke, of bering and array.
Diſcrete ſhe was in anſwering alway,
Though ſhe were wiſe as Pallas, dare I ſain,
Hire facounde eke ful womanly and plain,
No contrefeted termes hadde ſhe
To ſemen wiſe; but after hire degree
She ſpake, and all hire wordes more and leſſe
Souning in vertue and in gentilleſſe.
Shamefaſt ſhe was in maidens ſhamefaſtneſſe,
Conſtant in herte, and ever in beſineſſe
To drive hire out of idel ſlogardie:
Bacchus had of hire mouth right no maiſtrie.
For wine and youthe don Venus encreſe,
As men in fire wol caſten oile and greſe.
And of hire owen vertue unconſtreined,
She hath hireſelf ful often ſike yfeined,
For that ſhe wolde fleen the compagnie,
Wher likely was to treten of folie,
As is at feſtes, at revels, and at dances,
That ben occaſions of daliances.
Swiche thinges maken children for to be
To ſone ripe and bold, as men may ſee,
Which is ful perilous, and hath ben yore;
For al to ſone may ſhe lernen lore
Of boldneſſe, whan ſhe woxen is a wif.
And ye maiſtreſſes in your olde lif,

That lordes doughters han in governance,
Ne taketh of my wordes diſpleſance:
Thinketh that ye ben ſet in governinges
Of lordes doughters, only for two thinges,
Other for ye han kept your honeſtee,
Or elles for ye han fallen in freeltee,
And knowen wel ynough the olde dance,
And han forſaken fully ſwiche meſchance
For evermo: therfore for Criſtes ſake
To teche hem vertue loke that ye ne ſlake.
A theef of veniſon, that hath forlaſt
His likerouſneſſe, and all his olde craft,
Can kepe a foreſt beſt of any man:
Now kepeth hem wel, for if ye wol ye can.
Loke wel, that ye unto no vice aſſent,
Leſt ye be damned for your wikke entent,
For who ſo doth, a traytour is certain:
And taketh kepe of that I ſhal you ſain;
Of alle treſon ſoveraine peſtilence
Is, whan a wight betrayeth innocence.
Ye fathers, and ye mothers eke alſo,
Though ye han children, be it on or mo,
Your is the charge of all hir ſurveance,
While that they ben under your governance.
Beth ware, that by enſample of your living,
Or by your negligence in chaſtiſing,

That

That they ne periſh: for I dare wel ſaye,
If that they don, ye ſhul it dere abeye.
Under a ſhepherd ſoft and negligent,
The wolf hath many a ſhepe and lamb to-rent.
Sufficeth this enſample now as here,
For I mote turne agen to my matere.
This maid, of which I tell my tale expreſſe,
She kept hireſelf, hire neded no maiſtreſſe;
For in hire living maidens mighten rede,
As in a book, every good word and dede,
That longeth to a maiden vertuous:
She was ſo prudent and ſo bounteous,
For which the fame out ſprong on every ſide
Both of hire beautee and hire bountee wide:
That thurgh the lond they preiſed hire ech one,
That loved vertue, ſauf envie alone,
That ſory is of other mannes wele,
And glad is of his ſorwe and his unhele.
The doctour maketh this deſcriptioun.
This maiden on a day went in the toun
Toward a temple, with hire mother dere,
As is of yonge maidens the manere.
Now was ther than a juſtice in that toun,
That governour was of that regioun:
And ſo befell, this juge his eyen caſt
Upon this maid, aviſing hire ful faſt,

As ſhe came forth by ther this juge ſtood:
Anon his herte changed and his mood,
So was he caught with beautee of this maid,
And to himſelf ful prively he ſaid,
This maiden ſhal be min for any man.
Anon the fend into his herte ran,
And taught him ſodenly, that he by ſleight
This maiden to his purpos winnen might.
For certes, by no force, ne by no mede,
Him thought he was not able for to ſpede;
For ſhe was ſtrong of frendes, and eke ſhe
Confermed was in ſwiche ſoveraine bountee,
That wel he wiſt he might hire never winne,
As for to make hire with hire body ſinne.
For which with gret deliberatioun
He ſent after a cherl was in the toun,
The which he knew for ſotil and for bold.
This juge unto this cherl his tale hath told
In ſecree wiſe, and made him to enſure,
He ſhulde tell it to no creature,
And if he did, he ſhulde leſe his hede.
And whan aſſented was this curſed rede,
Glad was the juge, and maked him gret chere,
And yaf him yeftes precious and dere.
Whan ſhapen was all hir conſpiracie
Fro point to point, how that his lecherie

Parformed

Parformed ſhulde be ful ſotilly,
As ye ſhul here it after openly,
Home goth this cherl, that highte Claudius.
This falſe juge, that highte Appius,
(So was his name, for it is no fable,
But knowen for an hiſtorial thing notable;
The ſentence of it ſoth is out of doute)
This falſe juge goth now faſt aboute
To haſten his delit all that he may.
And ſo befell, ſone after on a day
This falſe juge, as telleth us the ſtorie,
As he was wont, ſat in his conſiſtorie,
And yaf his domes upon ſondry cas;
This falſe cherl came forth a ful gret pas,
And ſaide; lord, if that it be your will,
As doth me right upon this pitous bill,
In which I plaine upon Virginius.
And if that he wol ſayn it is not thus,
I wol it preve, and finden good witneſſe,
That ſoth is that my bille wol expreſſe.
The juge anſwerd, of this in his abſence
I may not yeve diffinitif ſentence.
Let don him call, and I wol gladly here;
Thou ſhalt have right, and no wrong as now here.
Virginius came to wete the juges will,
And right anon was red this curſed bill;

The ſentence of it was as ye ſhul here.
To you, my lord ſire Appius ſo dere,
Sheweth your poure ſervant Claudius,
How that a knight called Virginius,
Agein the lawe, agein all equitee,
Holdeth, expreſſe agein the will of me,
My ſervant, which that is my thral by right,
Which from min hous was ſtolen on a night
While that ſhe was ful yong, I wol it preve
By witneſſe, lord, ſo that it you not greve; 12120
She n'is his doughter nought, what ſo he ſay.
Wherfore to you, my lord the juge, I pray;
Yelde me my thral, if that it be your will.
Lo, this was all the ſentence of his bill.
Virginius gan upon the cherl behold;
But haſtily, er he his tale told,
And wold han preved it, as ſhuld a knight,
And eke by witneſſing of many a wight,
That all was falſe, that ſaid his adverſary,
This curſed juge wolde nothing tary, 12130
Ne here a word more of Virginius,
But yave his jugement, and ſaide thus.
I deme anon this cherl his ſervant have.
Thou ſhalt no lenger in thin hous hire ſave.
Go bring hire forth, and put hire in our ward.
The cherl ſhal have his thral; thus I award,

And

And whan this worthy knight Virginius,
Thurgh ſentence of this juſtice Appius,
Muſte by force his dere doughter yeven
Unto the juge, in lecherie to liven,
He goth him home, and ſet him in his hall,
And let anon his dere doughter call:
And with a face ded as aſhen cold,
Upon hire humble face he gan behold,
With fadres pitee ſtiking thurgh his herte,
Al wold he from his purpos not converte.
Doughter, quod he, Virginia by thy name,
Ther ben two waies, other deth or ſhame,
That thou muſt ſuffre, alas that I was bore!
For never thou deſervedeſt wherfore
To dien with a ſwerd or with a knif,
O dere doughter, ender of my lif,
Which I have foſtred up with ſwiche pleſance,
That thou were never out of my remembrance;
O doughter, which that art my laſte wo,
And in my lif my laſte joye alſo,
O gemme of chaſtitee, in patience
Take thou thy deth, for this is my ſentence;
For love and not for hate thou muſt be ded,
My pitous hond muſt ſmiten of thin hed.
Alas that ever Appius thee ſay!
Thus hath he falſely juged thee to-day.

And

And told hire all the cas, as ye before
Han herd, it nedeth not to tell it more.
O mercy, dere father, quod this maid.
And with that word ſhe both hire armes laid
About his necke, as ſhe was wont to do,
(The teres braſt out of hire eyen two,)
And ſaid, O goode father, ſhal I die?
Is ther no grace? is ther no remedie?
No certes, dere doughter min, quod he.
Than yeve me leiſer, father min, quod ſhe,
My deth for to complaine a litel ſpace:
For parde Jepte yave his doughter grace
For to complaine, or he hire ſlow, alas!
And God it wot, nothing was hire treſpas,
But for ſhe ran hire father firſt to ſee,
To welcome him with gret ſolempnitee.
And with that word ſhe fell aſwoune anon,
And after, whan hire ſwouning was agon,
She riſeth up, and to hire father ſaid:
Bleſſed be God, that I ſhal die a maid.
Yeve me my deth, or that I have a ſhame.
Doth with your child your wille a goddes name.
And with that word ſhe praied him ful oft,
That with his ſwerd he wolde ſmite hire ſoft;
And with that word, aſwoune again ſhe fell.
Hire father, with ful ſorweful herte and will,

Hire

Hire hed of ſmote, and by the top it hent,
And to the juge he gan it to preſent,
As he ſat yet in dome in conſiſtorie.
And whan the juge it ſaw, as ſaith the ſtorie,
He bad to take him, and anhang him faſt.
But right anon a thouſand peple in thraſt
To ſave the knight, for routh and for pitee,
For knowen was the falſe iniquitee.
The peple anon had ſuſpect in this thing
By maner of the cherles chalenging,
That it was by the aſſent of Appius;
They wiſten wel that he was lecherous.
For which unto this Appius they gon,
And caſte him in a priſon right anon,
Wheras he ſlow himſelf: and Claudius,
That ſervant was unto this Appius,
Was demed for to hange upon a tree;
But that Virginius of his pitee
So prayed for him, that he was exiled,
And elles certes had he ben begiled:
The remenant were anhanged, more and leſſe,
That were conſentant of this curſedneſſe.
Here men may ſee how ſin hath his merite:
Beth ware, for no man wot whom God wol ſmite
In no degree, ne in which maner wiſe
The worme of conſcience may agriſe

Of

Of wicked lif, though it ſo privee be,
That no man wote therof, ſauf God and he:
For be he lewed man or elles lered,
He n'ot how ſone that he ſhal ben afered.
Therfore I rede you this conſeil take,
Forſaketh ſinne, or ſinne you forſake.

THE PARDONERES PROLOGUE.

Our Hoſte gan to ſwere as he were wood;
Harow! (quod he) by nailes and by blood,
This was a falſe cherl, and a falſe juſtice.
As ſhameful deth, as herte can deviſe,
Come to thiſe juges and hir advocas.
Algate this ſely maide is ſlain, alas!
Alas! to dere abought ſhe hire beautee.
Wherfore I ſay, that al day man may ſee,
That yeftes of fortune and of nature
Ben cauſe of deth to many a creature.
Hire beautee was hire deth, I dare wel ſain;
Alas! ſo pitouſly as ſhe was ſlain.
Of bothe yeftes, that I ſpeke of now,
Men han ful often more for harm than prow.
But trewely, min owen maiſter dere,
This was a pitous tale for to here:
But natheles, paſſe over, is no force.
I pray to God ſo ſave thy gentil corps,

And

And eke thyn urinals, and thy jordanes,
Thin ypocras, and eke thy galianes,
And every boiſt ful of thy letuarie,
God bleſſe hem and our lady Seinte Marie.
So mote I the, thou art a propre man,
And like a prelat by Seint Ronian;
Said I not wel? I cannot ſpeke in terme;
But wel I wot, thou doſt min herte to erme,
That I have almoſt caught a cardiacle:
By *corpus domini* but I have triacle,
Or elles a draught of moiſt and corny ale,
Or but I here anon a mery tale,
Myn herte is loſt for pitee of this maid.
Thou *bel amy*, thou pardoner, he ſaid,
Tel us ſom mirth of japes right anon.
It ſhal be don, quod he, by Seint Ronion.
But firſt (quod he) here at this ale-ſtake
I wol both drinke, and biten on a cake.
But right anon thiſe gentiles gan to crie;
Nay, let him tell us of no ribaudrie.
Tell us ſom moral thing, that we mow lere,
Som wit, and thanne wol we gladly here.
I graunte ywis, quod he, but I muſt thinke
Upon ſom honeſt thing, while that I drinke.

THE PARDONERES TALE.

Lordings, quod he, in chirche whan I preche,
I peine me to have an hautein ſpeche,

And

And ring it out, as round as goth a bell,
For I can all by rote that I tell.
My teme is alway on, and ever was;
Radix malorum eſt cupiditas.
Firſt I pronounce whennes that I come,
And than my bulles ſhew I all and ſome:
Our liege lordes ſele on my patente,
That ſhew I firſt my body to warrente,
That no man be ſo bold, ne preeſt ne clerk,
Me to diſturbe of Criſtes holy werk.
And after that than tell I forth my tales.
Bulles of popes, and of cardinales,
Of patriarkes, and biſhoppes I ſhewe,
And in Latin I ſpeke a wordes fewe,
To ſaffron with my predication,
And for to ſtere men to devotion.
Than ſhew I forth my longe criſtal ſtones,
Ycrammed ful of cloutes and of bones,
Relikes they ben, as wenen they echon.
Than have I in laton a ſhulder bone,
Which that was of an holy iewes ſhepe.
Good men, ſay I, take of my wordes kepe:
If that this bone be waſhe in any well,
If cow, or calf, or ſhepe, or oxe ſwell,
That any worm hath ete, or worm yſtonge,
Take water of that well, and waſh his tonge,

And it is hole anon: and forthermore
Of pockes, and of ſcab, and every ſore
Shal every ſhepe be hole, that of this well
Drinketh a draught; take kepe of that I tell.
If that the good man, that the beſtes oweth,
Wol every weke, er that the cok him croweth,
Faſting ydrinken of this well a draught,
As thilke holy Jew our eldres taught,
His beſtes and his ſtore ſhal multiplie.
And, ſires, alſo it heleth jalouſie.
For though a man be falle in jalous rage,
Let maken with this water his potage,
And never ſhal he more his wif miſtriſt,
Though he the ſoth of hire defaute wiſt;
Al had ſhe taken preeſtes two or three.
Here is a mitaine eke, that ye may ſee:
He that his hand wol put in this mitaine,
He ſhal have multiplying of his graine,
Whan he hath ſowen, be it whete or otes,
So that he offer pens or elles grotes.
And, men and women, o thing warne I you:
If any wight be in this chirche now,
That hath don ſinne horrible, ſo that he
Dare not for ſhame of it yſhriven be:
Or any woman, be ſhe yong or old,
That hath ymade hire huſbond cokewold,

Swiche folk ſhul han no power ne no grace
To offer to my relikes in this place.
And who ſo findeth him out of ſwiche blame,
He wol come up and offer in Goddes name,
And I aſſoyle him by the auctoritee,
Which that by bulle ygranted was to me.
By this gaude have I wonnen yere by yere
An hundred mark, ſin I was pardonere.
I ſtonde like a clerk in my pulpet,
And whan the lewed peple is doun yſet,
I preche ſo as ye han herd before,
And tell an hundred falſe japes more.
Than peine I me to ſtretchen forth my necke,
And eſt and weſt upon the peple I becke,
As doth a dove, ſitting upon a berne:
Myn hondes and my tonge gon ſo yerne,
That it is joye to ſee my beſineſſe.
Of avarice and of ſwiche curſedneſſe
Is all my preching, for to make hem free
To yeve hir pens, and namely unto me.
For min entente is not but for to winne,
And nothing for correction of ſinne.
I recke never whan that they be beried,
Though that hir ſoules gon a blake beried.
For certes many a predication
Cometh oft time of evil entention;

Som

Som for pleſance of folk, and flaterie,
To ben avanced by hypocriſie;
And ſom for vaine glorie, and ſom for hate.
For whan I dare non other wayes debate,
Than wol I ſting him with my tonge ſmerte
In preching, ſo that he ſhal not aſterte
To ben defamed falſely, if that he
Hath treſpaſed to my brethren or to me.
For though I telle not his propre name,
Men ſhal wel knowen that it is the ſame
By ſignes, and by other circumſtances.
Thus quite I folk, that don us diſpleſances:
Thus ſpit I out my venime under hewe
Of holineſſe, to ſeme holy and trewe.
But ſhortly min entente I wol deviſe,
I preche of nothing but for covetiſe.
Therfore my teme is yet, and ever was,
Radix malorum eſt cupiditas.
Thus can I preche again the ſame vice
Which that I uſe, and that is avarice.
But though myſelf be gilty in that ſinne,
Yet can I maken other folk to twinne
From avarice, and ſore hem to repente.
But that is not my principal entente;
I preche nothing but for covetiſe.
Of this matere it ought ynough ſuffiſe.

Than tell I hem enſamples many on
Of olde ſtories longe time agon.
For lewed peple loven tales olde;
Swhiche thinges can they wel report and holde.
What? trowen ye, that whiles I may preche
And winnen gold and ſilver for I teche,
That I wol live in poverte wilfully?
Nay, nay, I thought it never trewely.
For I wol preche and beg in ſondry londes,
I wol not do no labour with min hondes,
Ne make baſkettes for to live therby,
Becauſe I wol not beggen idelly.
I wol non of the apoſtles contrefete:
I wol have money, wolle, cheſe, and whete,
Al were it yeven of the poureſt page,
Or of the poureſt widewe in a village:
Al ſhulde hire children ſterven for famine.
Nay, I wol drinke the licour of the vine,
And have a joly wenche in every toun.
But herkeneth, lordings, in concluſioun,
Your liking is that I ſhal tell a tale.
Now I have dronke a draught of corny ale,
By God I hope I ſhal you tell a thing,
That ſhal by reſon ben at your liking:
For though myſelf be a ful vicious man,
A moral tale yet I you tellen can,

Which

Which I am wont to prechen, for to winne.
Now hold your pees, my tale I wol beginne.

In Flandres whilom was a compagnie
Of yonge folk, that haunteden folie,
As haſard, riot, ſtewes, and tavernes;
Wheras with harpes, lutes, and giternes,
They dance and plaie at dis bothe day and night,
And ete alſo, and drinke over hir might;
Thurgh which they don the devil ſacrifice
Within the devils temple, in curſed wiſe,
By ſuperfluitee abhominable.
Hir othes ben ſo gret and ſo damnable,
That it is griſly for to here hem ſwere.
Our blisful lordes body they to-tere;
Hem thought the Jewes rent him not ynough;
And eche of hem at others ſinne lough.
And right anon in comen tombeſteres
Fetis and ſmale, and yonge fruiteſteres,
Singers with harpes, baudes, wafereres,
Which ben the veray devils officeres,
To kindle and blow the fire of lecherie,
That is annexed unto glotonie.
The holy writ take I to my witneſſe,
That luxurie is in wine and dronkeneſſe.

Lo, how that dronken Loth unkindely
Lay by his daughters two unwetingly,
So dronke he was he n'iſte what he wrought.
Herodes, who ſo wel the ſtories ſought,
Whan he of wine replete was at his feſte,
Right at his owen table he yave his heſte
To ſleen the Baptiſt John ful giltеles.
Seneca ſaith a good word douteles:
He ſaith he can no difference find
Betwix a man that is out of his mind,
And a man whiche that is dronkelew:
But that woodneſſe, yfallen in a ſhrew,
Perſevereth lenger than doth dronkeneſſe.
O glotonie, full of curſedneſſe;
O cauſe firſt of our confuſion,
O original of our damnation,
Til Criſt had bought us with his blood again.
Loketh, how dere, ſhortly for to ſain,
Abought was thilke curſed vilanie:
Corrupt was all this world for glotonie.
Adam our father, and his wif alſo,
Fro Paradis, to labour and to wo,
Were driven for that vice, it is no drede.
For while that Adam faſted, as I rede,
He was in Paradis, and whan that he
Ete of the fruit defended on a tree,

Anon

Anon he was out caſt to wo and peine.
O glotonie, on thee wel ought us plaine.
O, wiſt a man how many maladies
Folwen of exceſſe and of glotonies,
He wolde ben the more meſurable
Of his diete, ſitting at his table.
Alas! the ſhorte throte, the tendre mouth,
Maketh that Eſt and Weſt, and North and South,
In erthe, in air, in water, men to-ſwinke,
To gete a gloton deintee mete and drinke.
Of this matere, O Poule, wel canſt thou trete.
Mete unto wombe, and wombe eke unto mete
Shal God deſtroien bothe, as Paulus ſaith.
Alas! a foule thing is it by my faith
To ſay this word, and fouler is the dede,
Whan man ſo drinketh of the white and rede,
That of his throte he maketh his privee
Thurgh thilke curſed ſuperfluitee.
The Apoſtle ſaith weping ful pitouſly,
Ther walken many, of which you told have I,
I ſay it now weping with pitous vois,
That they ben enemies of Criſtes crois:
Of whiche the end is deth, womb is hir God,
O wombe, O belly, ſtinking is thy cod,
Fulfilled of dong and of corruptioun;
At either end of thee foule is the ſoun.

How gret labour and coſt is thee to find!
Thiſe cokes how they ſtamp, and ſtrein, and grind,
And turnen ſubſtance into accident,
To fulfill all thy likerous talent!
Out of the harde bones knocken they
The mary, for they caſten nought away,
That may go thurgh the gullet ſoft and ſote:
Of ſpicerie, of leef, of barke, and rote,
Shal ben his ſauſe ymaked by delit
To make him yet a newer appetit.
But certes he, that haunteth ſwiche delices,
Is ded, while that he liveth in tho vices.
A lecherous thing is wine, and dronkeneſſe
Is ful of ſtriving and of wretchedneſſe.
O dronken man, disfigured is thy face,
Sour is thy breth, foul art thou to enbrace;
And thurgh thy dronken noſe ſemeth the ſoun,
As though thou ſaideſt ay, Sampſoun, Sampſoun:
And yet, God wot, Sampſoun dronk never no wine.
Thou falleſt, as it were a ſtiked ſwine:
Thy tonge is loſt, and all thin honeſt cure,
For dronkeneſſe is veray ſepulture
Of mannes wit, and his diſcretion.
In whom that drinke hath domination,
He can no conſeil kepe, it is no drede.
Now kepe you fro the white and fro the rede,

And

And namely fro the white wine of Lepe,
That is to ſell in Fiſhſtrete and in Chepe.
This wine of Spaigne crepeth ſubtilly
In other wines growing faſte by,
Of which ther riſeth ſwiche fumoſitee,
That whan a man hath dronken draughtes three,
And weneth that he be at home in Chepe,
He is in Spaigne, right at the toun of Lepe,
Not at the Rochell, ne at Burdeux toun;
And thanne wol he ſay, Sampſoun, Sampſoun.
But herkeneth, lordings, o word, I you pray,
That all the ſoveraine actes, dare I ſay,
Of victories in the Olde Teſtament,
Thurgh veray God, that is omnipotent,
Were don in abſtinence and in prayere:
Loketh the Bible, and ther ye mow it lere.
Loke Attila, the grete conquerour,
Died in his ſlepe, with ſhame and diſhonour,
Bleding ay at his noſe in dronkeneſſe:
A capitaine ſhulde live in ſobreneſſe.
And over all this, aviſeth you right wel,
What was commanded unto Lamuel;
Not Samuel, but Lamuel ſay I.
Redeth the Bible, and find it expreſly
Of wine yeving to hem that have juſtice.
No more of this, for it may wel ſuffice.

And

And now that I have ſpoke of glotonie,
Now wol I you defenden haſardrie.
Haſard is veray moder of leſinges,
And of deceite, and curſed forſweringes:
Blaſpheming of Criſt, manſlaughter, and waſt alſo
Of catel, and of time; and forthermo
It is repreve, and contrary of honour,
For to ben hold a commun haſardour.
And ever the higher he is of eſtat,
The more he is holden deſolat.
If that a Prince uſeth haſarderie,
In alle governance and policie
He is, as by commun opinion,
Yhold the leſſe in reputation.
Stilbon, that was a wiſe embaſſadour,
Was ſent to Corinth with ful gret honour
Fro Calidone, to maken hem alliance:
And whan he came, it happed him *par chance*,
That all the greteſt that were of that lond
Yplaying atte haſard he hem fond.
For which, as ſone as that it mighte be,
He ſtale him home agein to his contree,
And ſayde ther, I wol not leſe my name,
Ne wol not take on me ſo gret defame,
You for to allie unto non haſardours.
Sendeth ſom other wiſe embaſſadours,

For

For by my trouthe, me were lever die,
Than I you ſhuld to haſardours allie.
For ye, that ben ſo glorious in honours,
Shal not allie you to non haſardours,
As by my wille, ne as by my tretee.
This wiſe philoſophre thus ſayd he.
Loke eke how to the king Demetrius
The king of Parthes, as the book ſayth us,
Sent him a pair of dis of gold in ſcorne,
For he had uſed haſard therbeforne:
For which he held his glory and his renoun
At no value or reputatioun.
Lordes may finden other maner play
Honeſt ynough to drive the day away.
Now wol I ſpeke of othes falſe and grete
A word or two, as olde bookes trete.
Gret ſwering is a thing abhominable,
And falſe ſwering is yet more reprevable.
The highe God forbad ſwering at al,
Witneſſe on Mathew: but in ſpecial
Of ſwering ſayth the holy Jeremie,
Thou ſhalt ſwere ſoth thin othes, and not lie;
And ſwere in dome, and eke in rightwiſneſſe;
But idel ſwering is a curſedneſſe.
Behold and ſee, that in the firſte table
Of highe Goddes heſtes honourable,

How

How that the ſecond heſt of him is this,
Take not my name in idel or amis.
Lo, rather he forbedeth ſwiche ſwering,
Than homicide, or many an other thing.
I ſay that as by ordre thus it ſtondeth;
This knoweth he that his heſtes underſtondeth,
How that the ſecond heſt of God is that.
And forthermore, I wol thee tell all plat,
That vengeance ſhal not parten from his hous,
That of his othes is outrageous.
By Goddes precious herte, and by his nailes,
And by the blood of Criſt, that is in Hailes,
Seven is my chance, and thin is cink and treye:
By Goddes armes, if thou falſly pleye,
This dagger ſhal thurghout thin herte go.
This fruit cometh of the bicchel bones two,
Forſwering, ire, falſeneſſe, and homicide.
Now for the love of Criſt that for us dide,
Leteth your othes, bothe gret and ſmale.
But, ſires, now wol I tell you forth my tale.
Thiſe riotoures three, of which I tell,
Long erſt or prime rong of any bell,
Were ſet hem in a taverne for to drinke:
And as they ſat, they herd a belle clinke
Beforn a corps, was caried to his grave:
That on of hem gan callen to his knave,

Go

Go bet, quod he, and axe redily,
What corps is this, that paſſeth here forth by:
And loke that thou report his name wel.
  Sire, quod this boy, it nedeth never a del;
It was me told or ye came here two houres;
He was parde an old felaw of youres,
And ſodenly he was yſlain to-night,
Fordronke as he ſat on his benche upright,
Ther came a privee theef, men clepen Deth,
That in this contree all the peple ſleth,
And with his ſpere he ſmote his herte atwo,
And went his way withouten wordes mo.
He hath a thouſand ſlain this peſtilence:
And, maiſter, or ye come in his preſence,
Me thinketh that it were ful neceſſarie
For to beware of ſwiche an adverſarie:
Beth redy for to mete him evermore.
Thus taughte me my dame, I ſay no more.
  By Seinte Marie, ſayd this tavernere,
The child ſayth ſoth, for he hath ſlain this yere
Hens over a mile, within a gret village,
Both man and woman, child, and hyne, and page;
I trowe his habitation be there:
To ben aviſed gret wiſdome it were,
Or that he did a man a diſhonour.
  Ye, Goddes armes, quod this riotour,

Is it ſwiche peril with him for to mete?
I ſhal him ſeke by ſtile and eke by ſtrete.
I make a vow by Goddes digne bones.
Herkeneth, felawes, we three ben alle ones:
Let eche of us hold up his hond to other,
And eche of us becomen others brother,
And we wol ſlen this falſe traitour deth:
He ſhal be ſlain, he that ſo many ſleth,
By Goddes dignitee, or it be night.
Togeder han thiſe three hir trouthes plight
To live and dien eche of hem for other,
As though he were his owen boren brother.
And up they ſtert al dronken in this rage,
And forth they gon towardes that village,
Of which the taverner had ſpoke beforn,
And many a griſly oth than have they ſworn,
And Criſtes bleſſed body they to-rent;
Deth ſhal be ded, if that we may him hent.
Whan they han gon not fully half a mile,
Right as they wold han troden over a ſtile,
An olde man and a poure with hem mette.
This olde man ful mekely hem grette,
And ſayde, thus; Now, lordes, God you ſee.
The proudeſt of thiſe riotoures three
Anſwerd agen; What? cherl, with ſory grace,
Why art thou all forwrapped ſave thy face?

Why

Why liveſt thou ſo longe in ſo gret age?
This olde man gan loke in his viſage,
And ſayde thus; For I ne cannot finde
A man, though that I walked into Inde,
Neither in citee, ne in no village,
That wolde change his youthe for min age;
And therfore mote I han min age ſtill
As longe time as it is Goddes will.
Ne deth, alas! ne will not han my lif.
Thus walke I like a reſteles caitif,
And on the ground, which is my modres gate,
I knocke with my ſtaf, erlich and late,
And ſay to hire, Leve mother, let me in.
Lo, how I vaniſh, fleſh, and blood, and ſkin:
Alas! whan ſhul my bones ben at reſte?
Mother, with you wold I changen my cheſte,
That in my chambre longe time hath be,
Ye, for an heren clout to wrap in me.
But yet to me ſhe wol not don that grace,
For which ful pale and welked is my face.
But, ſires, to you it is no curteſie
To ſpeke unto an olde man vilanie,
But he treſpaſe in word or elles in dede.
In holy writ ye moun yourſelven rede;
Ageins an olde man, hore upon his hede,
Ye ſhuld ariſe: therfore I yeve you rede,

Ne

Ne doth unto an olde man non harm now,
No more than that ye wold a man did you
In age, if that ye may ſo long abide.
And God be with you, wher ye go or ride.
I moſte go thider as I have to go.
Nay, olde cherl, by God thou ſhalt not ſo,
Sayde this other haſardour anon;
Thou parteſt not ſo lightly by Seint John.
Thou ſpake right now of thilke traitour deth,
That in this contree all our frendes ſleth;
Have here my trouth as thou art his eſpie;
Tell wher he is, or thou ſhalt it abie,
By God and by the holy Sacrement;
For ſothly thou art on of his aſſent
To ſlen us yonge folk, thou falſe thefe.
Now, ſires, quod he, if it be you ſo lefe
To finden deth, tourne up this croked way,
For in that grove I left him by my fay
Under a tree, and ther he wol abide;
Ne for your boſt he wol him nothing hide.
Se ye that oke? right ther ye ſhuln him find.
God ſave you, that bought agen mankind,
And you amende; thus ſayd this olde man.
And everich of thiſe riotoures ran,
Til they came to the tree, and ther they found
Of Floreins fine of gold ycoined round,

Wel

Wel nigh an eighte buſhels, as hem thought.
No lenger as than after deth they ſought,
But eche of hem ſo glad was of the ſight,
For that the floreins ben ſo faire and bright,
That doun they ſette hem by the precious hord.
The werſte of hem he ſpake the firſte word.
  Brethren, quod he, take kepe what I ſhal ſay;
My wit is gret, though that I bourde and play.
This treſour hath fortune unto us yeven
In mirth and jolitee our lif to liven,
And lightly as it cometh, ſo wol we ſpend.
Ey, Goddes precious dignitee, who wend
To-day, that we ſhuld han ſo faire a grace?
But might this gold be caried fro this place
Home to myn hous, or elles unto youres,
(For wel I wote that all this gold is oures)
Thanne were we in high felicitee.
But trewely by day it may not be;
Men wolden ſay that we were theeves ſtrong,
And for our owen treſour don us hong.
This treſour muſt ycaried be by night
As wiſely and as ſleighly as it might.
Wherfore I rede, that cut among us alle
We drawe, and let ſee wher the cut wol falle:
And he that hath the cut, with herte blith,
Shal rennen to the toun, and that ful ſwith,

And bring us bred and win ful prively:
And two of us ſhal kepen ſubtilly
This treſour wel: and if he wol not tarien,
Whan it is night, we wol this treſour carien
By on aſſent, wher as us thinketh beſt.
That on of hem the cut brought in his feſt,
And bad hem drawe and loke wher it wold falle,
And it fell on the yongeſt of hem alle:
And forth toward the toun he went anon.
And al ſo ſone as that he was agon,
That on of hem ſpake thus unto that other;
Thou woteſt wel thou art my ſworen brother,
Thy profite wol I tell thee right anon.
Thou woſt wel that our felaw is agon,
And here is gold, and that ful gret plentee,
That ſhal departed ben among us three.
But natheles, if I can ſhape it ſo,
That it departed were among us two,
Had I not don a frendes turn to thee?
That other anſwerd, I n'ot how that may be:
He wote wel that the gold is with us tweye.
What ſhuln we don? what ſhuln we to him ſeye?
Shal it be conſeil? ſayd the firſte ſhrewe;
And I ſhal tellen thee in wordes fewe
What we ſhul don, and bring it wel aboute.
I grante, quod that other, out of doute,

That

That by my trouth I wol thee not bewreie.
Now, quod the firſt, thou woſt wel we ben tweie,
And tweie of us ſhul ſtrenger be than on.
Loke, whan that he is ſet, thou right anon
Ariſe, as though thou woldeſt with him play;
And I ſhal rive him thurgh the ſides tway,
While that thou ſtrogleſt with him as in game,
And with thy dagger loke thou do the ſame;
And than ſhal all this gold departed be,
My dere frend, betwixen thee and me:
Than moun we bothe our luſtes al fulfille,
And play at dis right at our owen wille.
And thus accorded ben thiſe ſhrewes tweye,
To ſlen the thridde, as ye han herd me ſeye.
This yongeſt, which that wente to the toun,
Ful oft in herte he rolleth up and doun
The beautee of thiſe floreins newe and bright.
O Lord, quod he, if ſo were that I might
Have all this treſour to myſelf alone,
Ther n'is no man that liveth under the trone
Of God, that ſhulde live ſo mery as I.
And at the laſt the fend our enemy
Putte in his thought, that he ſhuld poiſon beye,
With which he mighte ſlen his felaws tweye.
For why, the fend fond him in ſwiche living,
That he had leve to forwe him to bring.

For this was outrely his ful entente
To ſlen hem both, and never to repente.
And forth he goth, no lenger wold he tary,
Into the toun unto a Potecary,
And praied him that he him wolde ſell
Som poiſon, that he might his ratouns quell.
And eke ther was a polkat in his hawe,[1]
That, as he ſayd, his capons had yſlawe:
And fayn he wolde him wreken, if he might,
Of vermine, that deſtroied hem by night.
The Potecary anſwerd, Thou ſhalt have
A thing, as wiſly God my ſoule ſave,
In all this world ther n'is no creature,
That ete or dronke hath of this confecture,
Not but the mountance of a corne of whete,
That he ne ſhal his lif anon forlete;
Ye, ſterve he ſhal, and that in leſſe while,
Than thou wolt gon a pas not but a mile:
This poiſon is ſo ſtrong and violent.
This curſed man hath in his hond yhent
This poiſon in a box, and ſwithe he ran
Into the nexte ſtrete unto a man,
And borwed of him large botelles three;
And in the two the poiſon poured he;
The thridde he kepte clene for his drinke,
For all the night he ſhope him for to ſwinke

In

In carying of the gold out of that place.
And whan this riotour with ſory grace
Hath filled with win his grete botelles three,
To his felawes agen repaireth he.
What nedeth it therof to ſermon more?
For right as they had caſt his deth before,
Right ſo they han him ſlain, and that anon.
And whan that this was don, thus ſpake that on;
Now let us ſit and drinke, and make us mery,
And afterward we wiln his body bery.
And with that word it happed him *par cas*,
To take the botelle, ther the poiſon was,
And dronke, and yave his felaw drinke alſo,
For which anon they ſtorven bothe two.
But certes I ſuppoſe that Avicenne
Wrote never in no canon, ne in no fenne,
Mo wonder ſignes of empoiſoning,
Than had thiſe wretches two or hir ending.
Thus ended ben thiſe homicides two,
And eke the falſe empoiſoner alſo.
O curſedneſſe of alle curſedneſſe!
O traitours homicide! O wickedneſſe!
O glotonie, luxurie, and haſardrie!
Thou blaſphemour of Criſt with vilanie,
And othes grete, of uſage and of pride!
Alas! mankinde, how may it betide,

That to thy Creatour, which that thee wrought,
And with his precious herte-blood thee bought,
Thou art ſo falſe and ſo unkind, alas!
Now, good men, God foryeve you your treſpas;
And ware you fro the ſinne of avarice.
Min holy pardon may you all warice,
So that ye offre nobles or ſtarlinges,
Or elles ſilver broches, ſpones, ringes.
Boweth your hed under this holy Bulle.
Cometh up, ye wives, and offreth of your wolle;
Your names I entre here in my roll anon;
Into the bliſſe of heven ſhul ye gon;
I you aſſoile by min high powere,
You that wiln offre, as clene and eke as clere
As ye were borne. Lo, ſires, thus I preche;
And Jeſu Criſt, that is our ſoules leche,
So graunte you his pardon to receive;
For that is beſt, I wol you not deceive.
But, ſires, o word forgate I in my tale;
I have relikes and pardon in my male,
As faire as any man in Englelond,
Which were me yeven by the Popes hond.
If any of you wol of devotion
Offren, and han min abſolution,
Cometh forth anon, and kneleth here adoun,
And meekely receiveth my pardoun.

Or

Or elles taketh pardon, as ye wende,
Al newe and freſhe at every tounes ende,
So that ye offren alway newe and newe,
Nobles or pens, which that ben good and trewe.
It is an honour to everich that is here,
That ye moun have a ſuffiſant pardonere
To aſſoilen you in contree as ye ride,
For aventures, which that moun betide.
Paraventure ther may falle on, or two,
Doun of his hors, and breke his necke atwo.
Loke, which a ſeurtee is it to you alle,
That I am in your felawſhip yfalle,
That may aſſoile you bothe more and laſſe,
Whan that the ſoule ſhal fro the body paſſe.
I rede that our hoſte ſhal beginne,
For he is moſt envoluped in ſinne.
Come forth, ſire hoſte, and offre firſt anon,
And thou ſhalt kiſſe the relikes everich on,
Ye for a grote; unbokel anon thy purſe.
Nay nay, quod he, than have I Criſtes curſe.
Let be, quod he, it ſhal not be, ſo the ich.
Thou woldeſt make me kiſſe thin olde brech,
And ſwere it were a relike of a ſeint,
Though it were with thy foundement depeint.
But by the crois, which that Seint Heleine fond,
I wolde I had thin coilons in min hond,

Inſtede of relikes, or of ſeintuarie.
Let cut hem of, I wol thee help hem carie;
They ſhul be ſhrined in an hogges tord.
This Pardoner anſwered not a word;
So wroth he was, no word ne wolde he ſay.
Now, quod our hoſte, I wol no lenger play
With thee, ne with non other angry man.
But right anon the worthy knight began,
(Whan that he ſaw that all the peple lough)
No more of this, for it is right ynough.
Sire Pardoner, be mery and glad of chere;
And ye, ſire hoſte, that ben to me ſo dere,
I pray you that ye kiſſe the Pardoner;
And, Pardoner, I pray thee draw thee ner,
And as we diden, let us laugh and play.
Anon they kiſſed, and riden forth hir way.

THE SHIPMANNES PROLOGUE.

OUR hoſte upon his ſtirrops ſtode anon,
And ſaide; Good men, herkeneth everich on,
This was a thrifty tale for the nones.
Sire pariſh preeſt, quod he, for Goddes bones,
Tell us a tale, as was thy forward yore;
I ſee wel that ye lerned men in lore
Can mochel good, by Goddes dignitee.
The Perſon him anſwerd, *Benedicite!*

What

What eileth the man, ſo ſinfully to ſwere?
Our hoſte anſwerd, O Jankin, be ye there?
Now, good men, quod our hoſte, herkneth to me,
I ſmell a loller in the wind, quod he.
Abideth for Goddes digne paſſion,
For we ſhul han a predication:
This loller here wol prechen us ſomwhat.
Nay by my fathers ſoule, that ſhal he nat,
Sayde the Shipman, here ſhal he nat preche,
He ſhal no goſpel gloſen here ne teche.
We leven all in the gret God, quod he.
He wolde ſowen ſom difficultee,
Or ſpringen cockle in our clene corne.
And therfore, hoſte, I warne thee beforne,
My joly body ſhal a tale telle,
And I ſhal clinken you ſo mery a belle,
That I ſhal waken all this compagnie:
But it ſhal not ben of philoſophie,
Ne of phyſike, ne termes queinte of lawe;
Ther is but litel Latin in my mawe.

THE SHIPMANNES TALE.

A MARCHANT whilom dwelled at Seint Deniſe,
That riche was, for which men held him wiſe.
A wif he had of excellent beautee,
And compaignable, and revelous was ſhe,

Which

Which is a thing that cauſeth more diſpence,
Than worth is all the chere and reverence,
That men hem don at feſtes and at dances.
Swiche ſalutations and contenances
Paſſen, as doth a ſhadwe upon the wall:
But wo is him that payen mote for all.
The ſely huſbond algate he mote pay,
He mote us clothe and he mote us array
All for his owen worſhip richely:
In which array we dancen jolily.
And if that he may not paraventure,
Or elles luſt not ſwiche diſpence endure,
But thinketh it is waſted and yloſt,
Than mote another payen for our coſt,
Or lene us gold, and that is perilous.
This noble Marchant held a worthy hous,
For which he had all day ſo gret repaire
For his largeſſe, and for his wif was faire,
That wonder is: but herkeneth to my tale.
Amonges all thiſe geſtes gret and ſmale,
Ther was a Monk, a faire man and a bold,
I trow a thritty winter he was old,
That ever in on was drawing to that place.
This yonge Monk, that was ſo faire of face,
Acquainted was ſo with this goode man,
Sithen that hir firſte knowlege began,

That

That in his hous as familier was he,
As it poſſible is any frend to be.
And for as mochel as this goode man
And eke this Monk, of which that I began,
Were bothe two yborne in o village,
The Monk him claimeth, as for coſinage,
And he again him ſayd not ones nay,
But was as glad therof, as foule of day:
For to his herte it was a gret pleſance.
Thus ben they knit with eterne alliance,
And eche of hem gan other for to enſure
Of brotherhed, while that hir lif may dure.
Free was Dan John, and namely of diſpence
As in that hous, and ful of diligence
To don pleſance, and alſo gret coſtage;
He not forgate to yeve the leſte page
In all that hous; but, after hir degree,
He yave the lord, and ſithen his meinee,
Whan that he came, ſom maner honeſt thing;
For which they were as glad of his coming
As foule is fayn, whan that the ſonne up riſeth.
No more of this as now, for it ſuffiſeth.
But ſo befell, this Marchant on a day
Shope him to maken redy his array
Toward the toun of Brugges for to fare,
To byen ther a portion of ware:

For which he hath to Paris ſent anon
A meſſager, and praied hath Dan John
That he ſhuld come to Seint Denis, and pleie
With him, and with his wif, a day or tweie,
Or he to Brugges went, in alle wiſe.

This noble Monk, of which I you deviſe,
Hath of his Abbot, as him lift, licence,
(Becauſe he was a man of high prudence,
And eke an officer out for to ride,
To ſeen hir granges, and hir bernes wide)
And unto Seint Denis he cometh anon.

Who was ſo welcome as my lord Dan John,
Our dere couſin, ful of curteſie?
With him he brought a jubbe of Malveſie,
And eke another ful of fine Vernage,
And volatile, as ay was his uſage:
And thus I let hem ete, and drinke, and pleye,
This marchant and this monk, a day or tweye.

The thridde day this marchant up ariſeth,
And on his nedes ſadly him aviſeth:
And up into his countour hous goth he,
To reken with himſelven, wel may be,
Of thilke yere, how that it with him ſtood,
And how that he diſpended had his good,
And if that he encreſed were or non.
His bookes and his bagges many on

He

He layth beforn him on his counting bord.
Ful riche was his treſour and his hord;
For which ful faſt his countour dore he ſhet;
And eke he n'olde no man ſhuld him let
Of his accountes, for the mene time:
And thus he ſit, til it was paſſed prime.
Dan John was riſen in the morwe alſo,
And in the gardin walketh to and fro,
And hath his thinges ſayd ful curteiſly.
This goode wif came walking prively
Into the gardin, ther he walketh ſoft,
And him ſalueth, as ſhe hath don oft:
A maiden child came in hire compagnie,
Which as hire luſt ſhe may governe and gie,
For yet under the yerde was the maide.
O dere coſin min Dan John, ſhe ſaide,
What aileth you ſo rathe for to ariſe?
Nece, quod he, it ought ynough ſuffiſe
Five houres for to ſlepe upon a night:
But it were for an olde appalled wight,
As ben thiſe wedded men, that lie and dare,
As in a fourme ſitteth a wery hare,
Were al forſtraught with houndes gret and ſmale.
But, dere nece, why be ye ſo pale?
I trowe certes, that our goode man
Hath you laboured, ſith this night began,

That

That you were nede to reſten haſtily.
And with that word he lough ful merily,
And of his owen thought he wexe all red.
This faire wif gan for to ſhake hire hed,
And ſaied thus; Ye, God wote all, quod ſhe.
Nay, coſin min, it ſtant not ſo with me.
For by that God, that yave me ſoule and lif,
In all the reame of Fraunce is ther no wif,
That laſſe luſt hath to that ſory play:
For I may ſinge alas and wala wa
That I was borne, but to no wight (quod ſhe)
Dare I not tell how that it ſtant with me.
Wherfore I thinke out of this lond to wende,
Or elles of myſelf to make an ende,
So ful am I of drede and eke of care.
This monk began upon this wif to ſtare,
And ſayd, Alas! my nece, God forbede,
That ye for any ſorwe, or any drede,
Fordo yourſelf: but telleth me your grefe,
Paraventure I may in your miſchefe
Conſeile or helpe: and therfore telleth me
All your annoy, for it ſhal ben ſecree.
For on my Portos here I make an oth,
That never in my lif, for lefe ne loth,
Ne ſhal I of no conſeil you bewray.
The ſame agen to you, quod ſhe, I ſay.

By

By God and by this Portos I you ſwere,
Though men me wolden all in peces tere,
Ne ſhal I never, for to gon to helle,
Bewrey o word of thing that ye me tell,
Nought for no coſinage, ne alliance,
But verailly for love and affiance.
Thus ben they ſworne, and hereupon they kiſte,
And eche of hem told other what hem liſte.
Coſin, quod ſhe, if that I had a ſpace,
As I have non, and namely in this place,
Than wold I tell a legend of my liſ,
What I have ſuffred ſith I was a wif
With min huſbond, al be he your coſin.
Nay, quod this monk, by God and Seint Martin,
He n'is no more coſin unto me,
Than is the leef that hangeth on the tree:
I clepe him ſo by Seint Denis of France
To han the more cauſe of acquaintance
Of you, which I have loved ſpecially
Aboven alle women ſikerly,
This ſwere I you on my profeſſioun:
Telleth your grefe, leſt that he come adoun,
And haſteth you, and goth away anon.
My dere love, quod ſhe, o my Dan John,
Ful lefe were me this conſeil for to hide,
But out it mote, I may no lenger abide.

Myn huſbond is to me the werſte man,
That ever was ſith that the world began:
But ſith I am a wif, it ſit not me
To tellen no wight of our privetee,
Neither in bed, ne in non other place;
God ſhilde I ſhulde it tellen for his grace;
A wif ne ſhal not ſayn of hire huſbond
But all honour, as I can underſtond;
Save unto you thus moch I tellen ſhal:
As helpe me God, he is nought worth at all,
In no degree, the value of a flie.
But yet me greveth moſt his nigardie:
And wel ye wot, that women naturally
Deſiren thinges ſixe, as wel as I.
They wolden that hir huſbondes ſhulden be
Hardy, and wiſe, and riche, and therto free,
And buxome to his wif, and freſh a-bedde.
But by that ilke Lord that for us bledde,
For his honour myſelven for to array,
A ſonday next I muſte nedes pay
An hundred franks, or elles am I lorne.
Yet were me lever that I were unborne,
Than me were don a ſclandre or vilanie.
And if min huſbond eke might it eſpie,
I n'ere but loſt; and therfore I you prey
Lene me this ſumme, or elles mote I dey.

Dan

Dan John, I ſay, lene me this hundred frankes;
Parde I wol not faille you my thankes,
If that you liſt to do that I you pray.
For at a certain day I wol you pay,
And do to you what pleſance and ſervice
That I may don, right as you liſt deviſe:
And but I do, God take on me vengeance,
As foul as ever had Genelon of France.
This gentil monk anſwerd in this manere;
Now trewely, min owen lady dere,
I have (quod he) on you ſo grete a routhe,
That I you ſwere, and plighte you my trouthe,
That whan your huſbond is to Flandres fare,
I wol deliver you out of this care,
For I wol bringen you an hundred frankes.
And with that word he caught hire by the flankes,
And hire embraced hard, and kiſte hire oft.
Goth now your way, quod he, al ſtille and ſoft,
And let us dine as ſone as that ye may,
For by my kalender it is prime of day:
Goth now, and beth as trewe as I ſhal be.
Now elles God forbede, ſire, quod ſhe;
And forth ſhe goth, as joly as a pie,
And bad the cokes that they ſhuld hem hie,
So that men mighten dine, and that anon.
Up to hire huſbond is this wif ygon,

And knocketh at his countour boldely.
Qui eſt la? quod he. Peter, it am I,
Quod ſhe. What, ſire, how longe wol ye faſt?
How longe time wol ye reken and caſt
Your ſummes, and your bookes, and your thinges?
The devil have part of all ſwiche rekeninges.
Ye han ynough parde of Goddes ſonde.
Come doun to-day, and let your bagges ſtonde.
Ne be ye not aſhamed, that Dan John
Shal faſting all this day elenge gon?
What? let us here a maſſe, and go we dine.
Wif, quod this man, litel canſt thou divine
The curious buſineſſe that we have:
For of us chapmen, all ſo God me ſave,
And by that lord that cleped is Seint Ive,
Scarſly amonges twenty, ten ſhul thrive
Continuelly, laſting unto oure age.
We moun wel maken chere and good viſage,
And driven forth the world as it may be,
And kepen oure eſtat in privitee,
Til we be ded, or elles that we play
A pilgrimage, or gon out of the way.
And therfore have I gret neceſſitee
Upon this queinte world to aviſen me.
For evermore mote we ſtond in drede
Of hap and fortune in our chapmanhede.

To

To Flandres wol I go to-morwe at day,
And come agein as ſone as ever I may:
For which, my dere wif, I thee beſeke
As be to every wight buxom and meke,
And for to kepe our good be curious,
And honeſtly governe wel our hous.
Thou haſt ynough, in every maner wiſe,
That to a thrifty houſhold may ſuffice.
Thee lacketh non array, ne no vitaille;
Of ſilver in thy purſe ſhalt thou not faille.
And with that word his countour dore he ſhette,
And doun he goth; no lenger wold he lette;
And haſtily a maſſe was ther ſaide,
And ſpedily the tables were ylaide,
And to the diner faſte they hem ſpedde,
And richely this monk the chapman fedde.
And after diner Dan John ſobrely
This chapman toke apart, and prively
He ſaid him thus; Coſin, it ſtondeth ſo,
That, wel I ſee, to Brugges ye wol go,
God and Seint Auſtin ſpede you and gide.
I pray you, coſin, wiſely that ye ride;
Governeth you alſo of your diete
Attemprely, and namely in this hete.
Betwix us two nedeth no ſtrange fare;
Farewel, coſin, God ſhilde you fro care.

If any thing ther be by day or night,
If it lie in my power and my might,
That ye me wol command in any wiſe,
It ſhal be don, right as ye wol deviſe.
But o thing or ye go, if it may be,
I wolde prayen you for to lene me
An hundred frankes for a weke or tweye,
For certain beſtes that I muſte beye,
To ſtoren with a place that is oures:
(God helpe me ſo, I wold that it were youres)
I ſhal not faille ſurely of my day,
Not for a thouſand frankes, a mile way.
But let this thing be ſecree, I you preye;
For yet to-night thiſe beſtes mote I beye.
And fare now wel, min owen coſin dere,
Grand mercy of your coſt and of your chere.
This noble marchant gentilly anon
Anſwerd and ſaid, O coſin min Dan John,
Now ſikerly this is a ſmal requeſte:
My gold is youres, whan that it you leſte,
And not only my gold, but my chaffare:
Take what you leſt, God ſhilde that ye ſpare.
But o thing is, ye know it wel ynough
Of chapmen, that hir money is hir plough.
We moun creancen while we han a name,
But goodles for to ben it is no game.

Pay it agen, whan it lith in your eſe;
After my might ful fayn wold I you pleſe.
Thiſe hundred frankes fet he forth anon,
And prively he toke hem to Dan John:
No wight in al this world wiſt of this lone,
Saving this marchant, and Dan John alone.
They drinke, and ſpeke, and rome a while and pleye,
Til that Dan John rideth to his abbeye.
The morwe came, and forth this marchant rideth,
To Flandres ward, his prentis wel him gideth,
Til he came in to Brugges merily.
Now goth this marchant faſte and beſily
About his nede, and bieth, and creanceth;
He neither playeth at the dis, ne danceth;
But as a marchant, ſhortly for to tell,
He ledeth his lif, and ther I let him dwell.
The ſonday next the marchant was agon,
To Seint Denis ycomen is Dan John,
With croune and berde all freſh and newe yſhave,
In all the hous ther n'as ſo litel a knave,
Ne no wight elles, that he n'as ful fain,
For that my lord Dan John was come again.
And ſhortly to the point right for to gon,
This faire wif accordeth with Dan John,
That for thiſe hundred frankes he ſhuld all night
Haven hire in his armes bolt upright:

And this accord parformed was in dede.
In mirth all night a besy lif they lede
Til it was day, that Dan John yede his way,
And bad the meinie farewel, have good day.
For non of hem, ne no wight in the toun,
Hath of Dan John right non suspectioun;
And forth he rideth home to his abbey,
Or wher him liste, no more of him I sey.

This marchant, whan that ended was the faire,
To Seint Denis he gan for to repaire,
And with his wif he maketh feste and chere,
And telleth hire that chaffare is so dere,
That nedes muste he make a chevisance,
For he was bonde in a recognisance,
To payen twenty thousand sheldes anon.
For which this marchant is to Paris gon
To borwe of certain frendes that he hadde
A certain frankes, and som with him he ladde.
And whan that he was come in to the toun,
For gret chiertee and gret affectioun
Unto Dan John he goth him first to pleye;
Not for to axe or borwe of him moneye,
But for to wete and seen of his welfare,
And for to tellen him of his chaffare,
As frendes don, whan they ben mette in fere.

Dan John him maketh feste and mery chere;

And

And he him tolde agen ful ſpecially,
How he had wel ybought and graciouſly
(Thanked be God) all hole his marchandiſe:
Save that he muſt in alle manere wiſe
Maken a cheviſance, as for his beſte:
And than he ſhulde ben in joye and reſte.
Dan John anſwered, Certes I am fain,
That ye in hele be comen home again:
And if that I were riche, as have I bliſſe,
Of twenty thouſand ſheldes ſhuld ye not miſſe,
For ye ſo kindely this other day
Lente me gold, and as I can and may
I thanke you, by God and by Seint Jame.
But natheles I toke unto our Dame,
Your wif at home, the ſame gold again
Upon your benche, ſhe wote it wel certain,
By certain tokenes that I can hire tell.
Now by your leve, I may no lenger dwell;
Our abbot wol out of this toun anon,
And in his compagnie I muſte gon.
Grete wel our dame, min owen nece ſwete,
And farewel, dere coſin, til we mete.
This marchant which that was ful ware and wiſe,
Creanced hath, and paide eke in Paris
To certain Lumbardes redy in hir hond
The ſumme of gold, and gate of hem his bond,

And home he goth, mery as a popingay.
For wel he knew he ſtood in ſwiche array,
That nedes muſte he winne in that viage
A thouſand frankes, above all his coſtage.
His wif ful redy mette him at the gate,
As ſhe was wont of old uſage algate:
And all that night in mirthe they ben ſette,
For he was riche, and clerely out of dette.
Whan it was day, this marchant gan enbrace
His wif all newe, and kiſte hire in hire face,
And up he goth, and maketh it ful tough.
No more, quod ſhe, by God ye have ynough:
And wantonly agen with him ſhe plaide,
Til at the laſt this marchant to hire ſaide.
By God, quod he, I am a litel wrothe
With you, my wif, although it be me lothe:
And wote ye why? by God, as that I geſſe,
That ye han made a manere ſtrangeneſſe
Betwixen me and my coſin Dan John.
Ye ſhuld have warned me, or I had gon,
That he you had an hundred frankes paide
By redy token: and held him evil apaide,
For that I to him ſpake of cheviſance:
(Me ſemed ſo as by his contenance)
But natheles by God our heven king,
I thoughte not to axe of him no thing,

I pray

I pray thee, wif, ne do thou no more ſo.
Tell me alway, er that I fro thee go,
If any dettour hath in min abſence
Ypaide thee, leſt thurgh thy negligence
I might him axe a thing that he hath paide.
This wif was not aferde ne affraide,
But boldely ſhe ſaide, and that anon;
Mary I defie that falſe monk Dan John,
I kepe not of his tokenes never a del:
He toke me certain gold, I wote it wel.
What? evil thedome on his monkes ſnoute:
For, God it wote, I wend withouten doute,
That he had yeve it me, becauſe of you,
To don therwith min honour and my prow,
For coſinage, and eke for *belle chere*,
That he hath had ful often times here.
But ſith I ſee I ſtonde in ſwiche disjoint,
I wol anſwere you ſhortly to the point.
Ye have mo ſlakke dettours than am I:
For I wol pay you wel and redily
Fro day to day, and if ſo be I faille,
I am your wif, ſcore it upon my taile,
And I ſhal pay as ſone as ever I may.
For by my trouth, I have on min array,
And not in waſte, beſtowed it every del.
And for I have beſtowed it ſo wel

For your honour, for Goddes ſake I ſay,
As beth not wrothe, but let us laugh and play.
Ye ſhal my joly body han to wedde;
By God I n'ill not pay you but a-bedde:
Foryeve it me, min owen ſpouſe dere;
Turne hitherward and maketh better chere.
This marchant ſaw ther was no remedy:
And for to chide, it n'ere but a foly,
Sith that the thing may not amended be.
Now, wif, he ſaid, and I foryeve it thee;
But by thy lif ne be no more ſo large;
Kepe bet my good, this yeve I thee in charge.
Thus endeth now my tale, and God us ſende
Taling ynough, unto our lives ende.

THE PRIORESSES PROLOGUE.

WEL ſaid by *corpus Domini*, quod our Hoſte,
Now longe mote thou ſailen by the coſte,
Thou gentil Maiſter, gentil Marinere,
God gi:e the monke a thouſand laſt quad yere,
A ha, felawes, beth ware of ſwiche a jape.
The monke put in the mannes hode an ape,
And in his wifes eke, by Seint Auſtin.
Draweth no monkes more into your in.

But

But now paſſe over, and let us ſeke aboute,
Who ſhal now tellen firſt of all this route
Another tale: and with that word he ſaid,
As curteiſly as it had ben a maid,
My lady Prioreſſe, by your leve,
So that I wiſt I ſhuld you not agreve,
I wolde demen, that ye tellen ſhold
A tale next, if ſo were that ye wold.
Now wol ye voucheſauf, my lady dere?
Gladly, quod ſhe, and ſaide as ye ſhul here.

THE PRIORESSES TALE.

O Lord our lord, thy name how merveillous
Is in this large world yſprad! (quod ſhe)
For not al only thy laude precious
Parfourmed is by men of dignitee,
But by the mouth of children thy bountee
Parfourmed is, for on the breſt ſouking
Somtime ſhewen they thin herying.

Wherfore in laude, as I can beſt and may,
Of thee and of the white lily flour,
Which that thee bare, and is a maide alway,
To tell a ſtorie I wol do my labour;
Not that I may encreſen hire honour,

For

For ſhe hireſelven is honour and rote
Of bountee, next hire ſone, and ſoules bote.

O mother maide, o maide and mother fre,
O buſhe unbrent, brenning in Moyſes ſight,
That raviſhedeſt doun fro the deitee,
Thurgh thin humbleſſe, the goſt that in thee alight:
Of whos vertue, whan he thin herte light,
Conceived was the fathers ſapience:
Helpe me to tell it in thy reverence.

Lady, thy bountee, thy magnificence,
Thy vertue and thy gret humilitee,
Ther may no tonge expreſſe in no ſcience:
For ſomtime, lady, or men pray to thee,
Thou goſt beforn of thy benignitee,
And geteſt us the light of thy prayere,
To giden us unto thy ſone ſo dere.

My conning is ſo weke, o blisful quene,
For to declare thy grete worthineſſe,
That I ne may the weighte not ſuſtene;
But as a child of twelf moneth old or leſſe,
That can unnethes any word expreſſe,
Right ſo fare I, and therfore I you pray,
Gideth my ſong, that I ſhal of you ſay.

THER was in Aſie, in a gret citee,
Amonges Criſten folk a Jewerie,
Suſtened by a lord of that contree,
For foule uſure, and lucre of vilanie,
Hateful to Criſt, and to his compagnie:
And thurgh the ſtrete men mighten ride and wende,
For it was free, and open at eyther ende.

A litel ſcole of Criſten folk ther ſtood
Doun at the ferther ende, in which ther were
Children an hepe comen of Criſten blood,
That lerned in that ſcole yere by yere,
Swiche manere doctrine as men uſed there:
This is to ſay, to ſingen and to rede,
As ſmale children don in hir childhede.

Among thiſe children was a widewes ſone,
A litel clergion, ſevene yere of age,
That day by day to ſcole was his wone,
And eke alſo, wheras he ſey the image
Of Criſtes moder, had he in uſage,
As him was taught, to knele adoun, and ſay
Ave Marie, as he goth by the way.

Thus hath this widewe hire litel ſone ytaught
Our blisful Lady, Criſtes moder dere,
To worſhip ay, and he forgate it naught:
For ſely childe wol alway ſone lere.
But ay, whan I remembre on this matere,
Seint Nicholas ſtant ever in my preſence,
For he ſo yong to Criſt did reverence.

This litel childe his litel book lerning,
As he ſate in the ſcole at his primere,
He *Alma redemptoris* herde ſing,
As children lered hir antiphonere:
And as he dorſt, he drow him nere and nere,
And herkened ay the wordes and the note,
Til he the firſte vers coude al by rote.

Nought wiſt he what this Latin was to ſay,
For he ſo yonge and tendre was of age;
But on a day his felaw gan he pray
To expounden him this ſong in his langage,
Or telle him why this ſong was in uſage:
This prayde he him to conſtrue and declare,
Ful often time upon his knees bare.

His felaw, which that elder was than he,
Anſwerd him thus: This ſong, I have herd ſay,
Was maked of our blisful Lady fre,

Hire

Hire to ſalue, and eke hire for to prey
To ben our help, and ſocour whan we dey.
I can no more expound in this matere:
I lerne ſong, I can but ſmal grammere.

And is this ſong maked in reverence
Of Criſtes moder? ſaid this innocent;
Now certes I wol don my diligence
To conne it all, or Criſtemaſſe be went,
Though that I for my primer ſhal be ſhent,
And ſhal be beten thries in an houre,
I wol it conne, our Ladie for to honoure.

His felaw taught him homeward prively
Fro day to day, til he coude it by rote,
And than he ſong it wel and boldely
Fro word to word according with the note:
Twies a day it paſſed thurgh his throte,
To ſcoleward and homeward whan he wente:
On Criſtes moder ſet was his entente.

As I have ſaid, thurghout the Jewerie
This litel child as he came to and fro,
Ful merily than wold he ſing and crie,
O Alma redemptoris, ever mo:
The ſweteneſſe hath his herte perſed ſo

Of Criſtes moder, that to hire to pray
He cannot ſtint of ſinging by the way.

Our firſte fo, the ſerpent Sathanas,
That hath in Jewes herte his waſpes neſt,
Up ſwale and ſaid, O Ebraike peple, alas!
Is this to you a thing that is honeſt,
That ſwiche a boy ſhal walken as him leſte
In your deſpit, and ſing of ſwiche ſentence,
Which is again our lawes reverence?

From thennesforth the Jewes han conſpired
This innocent out of this world to chace:
An homicide therto han they hired,
That in an aleye had a privee place,
And as the child gan forthby for to pace,
This curſed Jew him hent, and held him faſt,
And cut his throte, and in a pit him caſt.

I ſay that in a wardrope they him threwe,
Wher as thiſe Jewes purgen hir entraille.
O curſed folk, of Herodes alle newe,
What may your evil entente you availle?
Mordre wol out, certein it wol not faille,
And namely ther the honour of God ſhal ſprede:
The blood out crieth on your curſed dede.

O martyr

O martyr ſouded in virginitee,
Now maiſt thou ſinge, and folwen ever in on
The white lamb celeſtial, quod ſhe,
Of which the gret Evangeliſt Seint John
In Pathmos wrote, which ſayth that they that gon
Beforn this lamb, and ſinge a ſong al newe,
That never fleſhly woman they ne knewe.

This poure widewe awaiteth al that night
After hire litel childe, and he came nought:
For which as ſone as it was dayes light,
With face pale of drede and beſy thought,
She hath at ſcole and elles wher him ſought,
Til finally ſhe gan ſo fer aſpie,
That he laſt ſeen was in the Jewerie.

With modres pitee in hire breſt encloſed
She goth, as ſhe were half out of hire minde,
To every place, wher ſhe hath ſuppoſed
By likelihed hire litel child to finde:
And ever on Criſtes moder meke and kinde
She cried, and at the laſte thus ſhe wrought,
Among the curſed Jewes ſhe him ſought.

She freyneth, and ſhe praieth pitouſly
To every Jew that dwelled in thilke place,

To telle hire, if hire child went ought forth by:
They ſayden, Nay; but Jeſu of his grace
Yave in hire thought, within a litel ſpace,
That in that place after hire ſone ſhe cride,
Ther he was caſten in a pit beſide.

O grete God, that parformeſt thy laude
By mouth of innocentes, lo here thy might!
This gemme of chaſtitee, this emeraude,
And eke of martirdome the rubie bright,
Ther he with throte ycorven lay upright,
He *Alma redemptoris* gan to ſinge
So loude, that all the place gan to ringe.

The Criſten folk, that thurgh the ſtrete wente,
In comen, for to wondre upon this thing:
And haſtifly they for the provoſt ſente.
He came anon withouten tarying,
And herieth Criſt, that is of heven king,
And eke his moder, honour of mankind,
And after that the Jewes let he binde.

This child with pitous lamentation
Was taken up, ſinging his ſong alway:
And with honour and gret proceſſion,
They carien him unto the next abbey.

His

His moder ſwouning by the bere lay;
Unnethes might the peple that was there
This newe Rachel bringen fro his bere.

With turment, and with ſhameful deth eche on
This provoſt doth thiſe Jewes for to ſterve,
That of this morder wiſte, and that anon;
He n'olde no ſwiche curſedneſſe obſerve:
Evil ſhal he have, that evil wol deſerve.
Therfore with wilde hors he did hem drawe,
And after that he heng hem by the lawe.

Upon his bere ay lith this innocent
Beforn the auter while the maſſe laſt:
And after that, the abbot with his covent
Han ſpedde hem for to berie him ful faſt:
And whan they holy water on him caſt,
Yet ſpake this child, whan ſpreint was the holy water,
And ſang, *o alma redemptoris mater.*

This abbot, which that was an holy man,
As monkes ben, or elles ought to be,
This yonge child to conjure he began,
And ſaid; O dere child, I halſe thee
In vertue of the holy Trinitee,
Tell me what is thy cauſe for to ſing,
Sith that thy throte is cut to my ſeming.

My throte is cut unto my nekke bon,
Saide this child, and as by way of kinde
I ſhuld have deyd, ye longe time agon:
But Jeſu Criſt, as ye in bookes finde,
Wol that his glory laſt and be in minde,
And for the worſhip of his moder dere,
Yet may I ſing *o alma* loude and clere.

This welle of mercie, Criſtes moder ſwete,
I loved alway, as after my conning:
And whan that I my lif ſhulde forlete,
To me ſhe came, and bad me for to ſing
This antem verayly in my dying,
As ye han herde, and, whan that I had ſonge,
Me thought ſhe laid a grain upon my tonge.

Wherfore I ſing, and ſing I mote certain
In honour of that blisful maiden free,
Til fro my tonge of taken is the grain.
And after that thus ſaide ſhe to me;
My litel child, than wol I fetchen thee,
Whan that the grain is fro thy tong ytake:
Be not agaſte, I wol thee not forſake.

This holy monk, this abbot him mene I,
His tonge out caught, and toke away the grain;

And he yave up the goſt ful ſoftely.
And whan this abbot had this wonder ſein,
His ſalte teres trilled adoun as reyne:
And groff he fell al platte upon the ground,
And ſtill he lay, as he had ben ybound.

The covent lay eke upon the pavement
Weping and herying Criſtes moder dere.
And after that they riſen, and forth ben went,
And toke away this martir fro his bere,
And in a tombe of marble ſtones clere
Encloſen they his litel body ſwete:
Ther he is now, God lene us for to mete.

O yonge Hew of Lincoln, ſlain alſo
With curſed Jewes, as it is notable,
For it n'is but a litel while ago,
Pray eke for us, we ſinful folk unſtable,
That of his mercy God ſo merciable
On us his grete mercie multiplie,
For reverence of his moder Marie.

PROLOGUE TO SIRE THOPAS.

Whan ſaid was this miracle, every man
As ſober was, that wonder was to ſee,
Til that our hoſte to japen he began,
And than at erſt he loked upon me,

And ſaide thus; What man art thou? quod he.
Thou lokeſt, as thou woldeſt finde an hare,
For ever upon the ground I ſee thee ſtare.

Approche nere, and loke up merily.
Now ware you, ſires, and let this man have place.
He in the waſte is ſhapen as wel as I:
This were a popet in an arme to enbrace
For any woman, ſmal and faire of face.
He ſemeth elviſh by his contenance,
For unto no wight doth he daliance.

Say now ſomwhat, ſin other folk han ſaide;
Tell us a tale of mirthe and that anon.
Hoſte, quod I, ne be not evil apaide,
For other tale certes can I non,
But of a rime I lerned yore agon.
Ye, that is good, quod he, we ſhullen here
Som deintee thing, me thinketh by thy chere.

THE RIME OF SIRE THOPAS.

Listeneth, lordinges, in good entent,
And I wol tel you *verament*
Of mirthe and of ſolas,
Al of a knight was faire and gent

In

In bataille and in turnament,
His name was ſire Thopas.

Yborne he was in fer contree,
In Flandres, al beyonde the ſee,
At Popering in the place,
His father was a man ful free,
And lord he was of that contree,
As it was Goddes grace.

Sire Thopas was a doughty ſwain,
White was his face as paindemaine
His lippes red as roſe.
His rudde is like ſcarlet in grain,
And I you tell in good certain
He had a ſemely noſe.

His here, his berde, was like ſafroun,
That to his girdle raught adoun,
His ſhoon of cordewane;
Of Brugges were his hoſen broun;
His robe was of chekelatoun,
That coſte many a jane.

He coude hunt at the wilde dere,
And ride on hauking for the rivere

With grey goſhauk on honde:
Therto he was a good archere,
Of wraſtling was ther non his pere,
Ther ony ram ſhuld ſtonde.

Ful many a maide bright in bour
They mourned for him *par amour*,
Whan hem were bet to ſlepe;
But he was chaſte and no lechour,
And ſwete as is the bramble flour,
That bereth the red hepe.

And ſo it fell upon a day,
Forſoth, as I you tellen may,
Sire Thopas wold out ride;
He worth upon his ſtede gray,
And in his hond a launcegay,
A long ſwerd by his ſide.

He priketh thurgh a faire foreſt,
Therin is many a wilde beſt,
Ye bothe buck and hare,
And as he priked North and Eſt,
I telle it you, him had almeſte
Betidde a ſory care.

Ther

Ther ſpringen herbes grete and ſmale,
The licoris and the ſetewale,
And many a cloue gilofre,
And notemuge to put in ale,
Whether it be moiſt or ſtale,
Or for to lain in cofre.

The briddes ſingen, it is no nay,
The ſperhauk and the popingay,
That joye it was to here,
The throſtel cok made eke his lay,
The wode dove upon the ſpray
He ſang ful loude and clere.

Sire Thopas fell in love-longing
Al whan he herd the throſtel ſing.
And priked as he were wood;
His faire ſtede in his priking
So ſwatte, that men might him wring,
His ſides were al blood.

Sire Thopas eke ſo wery was
For priking on the ſofte gras,
So fiers was his corage,
That doun he laid him in that place
To maken his ſtede ſom ſolace,
And yaf him good forage.

A, Seinte Mary, *benedicite*,
What aileth this love at me
To binde me ſo ſore?
Me dremed all this night parde,
An elf quene ſhal my lemman be,
And ſlepe under my gore.

An elf quene wol I love ywis,
For in this world no woman is
Worthy to be my make || in toun,—
All other women I forſake,
And to an elf quene I me take
By dale and eke by doun.

Into his ſadel he clombe anon,
And priked over ſtile and ſton
An elf quene for to eſpie,
Til he ſo long had ridden and gone,
That he fond in a privee wone
The contree of Faerie.

Wherin he ſoughte North and South,
And oft he ſpied with his mouth
In many a foreſt wilde,
For in that contree n'as ther non,
That to him dorſt ride or gon,
Neither wif ne childe.

Til

Til that ther came a gret geaunt,
His name was Sire Oliphaunt,
A perilous man of dede,
He ſayde, Child, by Termagaunt,
But if thou prike out of myn haunt,
Anon I ſlee thy ſtede || with mace—
Here is the Quene of Faerie,
With harpe, and pipe, and ſimphonie,
Dwelling in this place.

The child ſayd, Al ſo mote I the,
To morwe wol I meten thee,
Whan I have min armoure,
And yet I hope *par ma fay*,
That thou ſhalt with this launcegay
Abien it ful ſoure; || thy mawe
Shal I perce, if I may,
Or it be fully prime of the day,
For here thou ſhalt be ſlawe.

Sire Thopas drow abak ful faſt;
This geaunt at him ſtones caſt
Out of a fel ſtaffe ſling:
But faire eſcaped child Thopas,
And all it was thurgh Goddes grace,
And thurgh his faire bering.

Yet

Yet liſteneth, lordings, to my tale,
Merier than the nightingale,
For now I wol you roune,
How Sire Thopas with ſides ſmale,
Priking over hill and dale,
Is comen agein to toune.

His mery men commandeth he,
To maken him bothe game and gle,
For nedes muſt he fighte,
With a geaunt with hedes three,
For paramour and jolitee
Of on that ſhone ful brighte.

Do come, he ſayd, my mineſtrales
And geſtours for to tellen tales
Anon in min arming,
Of romaunces that ben reales,
Of popes and of cardinales,
And eke of love-longing.

They fet him firſt the ſwete win,
And mede eke in a maſelin,
And real ſpicerie,
Of ginger-bred that was ful fin,
And licoris and eke comin,
With ſuger that is trie.

He

He didde next his white lere
Of cloth of lake fin and clere
A breche and eke a ſherte,
And next his ſhert an haketon,
And over that an habergeon,
For percing of his herte,

And over that a fin hauberk,
Was all ywrought of Jewes werk,
Ful ſtrong it was of plate,
And over that his cote-armoure,
As white as is the lily floure,
In which he wold debate.

His ſheld was all of gold ſo red,
And therin was a bores hed,
A charboucle beſide;
And ther he ſwore on ale and bred
How that the geaunt ſhuld be ded,
Betide what ſo betide.

His jambeux were of cuirbouly,
His ſwerdes ſheth of ivory,
His helme of latoun bright,
His ſadel was of rewel bone,
His bridel as the ſonne ſhone,
Or as the mone light.

His

His ſpere was of fin cypres,
That bodeth werre, and nothing pees,
The hed ful ſharpe yground.
His ſtede was all dapple gray,
It goth an aumble in the way
Ful ſoftely and round || in londe —
Lo, Lordes min, here is a fit;
If ye wol ony more of it,
To telle it wol I fond.

Now hold your mouth *pour charite*,
Bothe knight and lady fre,
And herkeneth to my ſpell,
Of bataille and of chevalrie,
Of ladies love and druerie,
Anon I wol you tell.

Men ſpeken of romaunces of pris,
Of Hornchild, and of Ipotis,
Of Bevis, and Sire Guy,
Of Sire Libeux, and Pleindamour,
But Sire Thopas, he bereth the flour
Of real chevalrie.

His goode ſtede he al beſtrode,
And forth upon his way he glode,

As

As ſparcle out of bronde;
Upon his creſt he bare a tour,
And therin ſtiked a lily flour,
God ſhilde his corps fro ſhonde.

And for he was a knight auntrous,
He n'olde ſlepen in non hous,
But liggen in his hood,
His brighte helm was his wanger,
And by him baited his deſtrer
Of herbes fin and good.

Himſelf drank water of the well,
As did the knight Sire Percivell
So worthy under wede,
Til on a day —— ——

PROLOGUE TO MELIBEUS.

No more of this for Goddes dignitee,
Quod oure hoſte, for thou makeſt me
So wery of thy veray lewedneſſe,
That al ſo wiſly God my ſoule bleſſe,
Min eres aken of thy drafty ſpeche.
Now ſwiche a rime the devil I beteche;

This

This may wel be rime dogerel, quod he.
Why ſo? quod I, why wolt thou letten me
More of my tale, than an other man,
Sin that it is the beſte rime I can?
By God, quod he, for plainly at o word,
Thy drafty riming is not worth a tord:
Thou doſt nought elles but diſpendeſt time.
Sire, at o word, thou ſhalt no lenger rime.
Let ſee wher thou canſt tellen ought in geſte,
Or tellen in proſe ſomwhat at the leſte,
In which ther be ſom mirthe or ſom doctrine.
Gladly, quod I, by Goddes ſwete pine
I wol you tell a litel thing in proſe,
That oughte liken you, as I ſuppoſe,
Or elles certes ye be to dangerous.
It is a moral tale vertuous,
Al be it told ſomtime in ſondry wiſe
Of ſondry folk, as I ſhal you deviſe.
As thus, ye wote that every Evangeliſt,
That telleth us the peine of Jeſu Criſt,
Ne ſaith not alle thing as his felaw doth:
But natheles hir ſentence is al ſoth,
And alle accorden as in hir ſentence,
Al be ther in hir telling difference:
For ſom of hem ſay more, and ſom ſay leſſe,
Whan they his pitous paſſion expreſſe;

I mene

I mene of Mark and Mathew, Luke and John,
But douteles hir ſentence is all on.
Therfore, lordinges all, I you beſeche,
If that ye thinke I vary in my ſpeche,
As thus, though that I telle ſom del more
Of proverbes, than ye han herde before
Comprehended in this litel tretiſe here,
To enforcen with the effect of my matere,
And though I not the ſame wordes ſay
As ye han herde, yet to you alle I pray
Blameth me not, for, as in my ſentence,
Shul ye nowher finden no difference
Fro the ſentence of thilke tretiſe lite,
After the which this mery tale I write.
And therfore herkeneth what I ſhal ſay,
And let me tellen all my tale I pray.

THE TALE OF MELIBEUS.

A YONGE man called Melibeus, mighty and riche, begate upon his wif, that called was Prudence, a doughter which that called was Sophie.

Upon a day befell, that he for his diſport is went into the feldes him to playe. His wif and eke his doughter hath he laft within his

hous, of which the dores weren faſt yſhette. Foure of his olde foos han it eſpied, and ſetten ladders to the walles of his hous, and by the windowes ben entred, and beten his wif, and wounded his doughter with five mortal woundes, in five ſondry places; this is to ſay, in hire feet, in hire hondes, in hire eres, in hire noſe, and in hire mouth; and leften hire for dede, and wenten away.

Whan Melibeus retorned was into his hous, and ſey al this meſchief, he, like a mad man, rending his clothes, gan to wepe and crie.

Prudence his wif, as fer forth as ſhe dorſte, beſought him of his weping for to ſtint: but not forthy he gan to crie and wepen ever lenger the more.

This noble wif Prudence remembred hire upon the ſentence of Ovide, in his book that cleped is the Remedie of love, wheras he ſaith; he is a fool that diſtourbeth the moder to wepe, in the deth of hire childe, til ſhe have wept hire fille, as for a certain time: and than ſhal a man don his diligence with amiable wordes hire to reconforte and preye hire of hire weping for to ſtinte. For which reſon this noble wif Prudence ſuffred hire houſbond for to wepe and crie,

as

as for a certain ſpace; and whan ſhe ſaw hire time, ſhe ſayde to him in this wiſe. Alas! my lord, quod ſhe, why make ye youreſelf for to be like a fool? Forſothe it apperteineth not to a wiſe man, to maken ſwiche a ſorwe. Youre doughter, with the grace of God, ſhal wariſh and eſcape. And al were it ſo that ſhe right now were dede, ye ne ought not as for hire deth youreſelf to deſtroye. Senek ſaith; the wiſe man ſhal not take to gret diſcomfort for the deth of his children, but certes he ſhulde ſuffren it in patience, as wel as he abideth the deth of his owen propre perſone.

This Melibeus anſwered anon and ſaide: what man (quod he) ſhulde of his weping ſtinte, that hath ſo gret a cauſe for to wepe? Jeſu Criſt, our Lord, himſelf wepte for the deth of Lazarus his frend. Prudence anſwered; certes wel I wote, attempre weping is nothing defended, to him that ſorweful is, among folk in ſorwe, but it is rather graunted him to wepe. The Apoſtle Poule unto the Romaines writeth; man ſhal rejoyce with hem that maken joye, and wepen with ſwiche folk as wepen. But though attempre weping be ygranted, outrageous weping certes is defended. Meſure of weping

ſhulde be conſidered, after the lore that techeth us Senek. Whan that thy frend is dede (quod he) let not thin eyen to moiſte ben of teres, ne to muche drie: although the teres comen to thin eyen, let hem not falle. And whan thou haſt forgon thy frend, do diligence to get agein another frend: and this is more wiſdom than for to wepe for thy frend, which that thou haſt lorne, for therin is no bote. And therfore if ye governe you by ſapience, put away ſorwe out of youre herte. Remembreth you that Jeſus Sirak ſayth; a man that is joyous and glad in herte, it him conſerveth floriſhing in his age: but ſothly a ſorweful herte maketh his bones drie. He ſaith eke thus, that ſorwe in herte ſleeth ful many a man. Salomon ſayth, that right as mouthes in the ſhepes fleeſe anoien to the clothes, and the ſmale wormes to the tree, right ſo anoieth ſorwe to the herte of man. Wherfore us ought as wel in the deth of oure children, as in the loſſe of oure goodes temporel, have patience.

Remembre you upon the patient Job, whan he hadde loſt his children and his temporel ſubſtaunce, and in his body endured and received ful many a grevous tribulation, yet ſayde he thus:

thus: Oure Lord hath yeve it to me, oure Lord hath beraft it me; right as oure Lord hath wold, right ſo is it don; ybleſſed be the name of oure Lord. To thiſe foreſaide thinges anſwered Melibeus unto his wif Prudence: all thy wordes (quod he) ben trewe, and therto profitable, but trewely min herte is troubled with this ſorwe ſo grevouſly, that I n'ot what to don. Let calle (quod Prudence) thyn trewe frendes alle, and thy linage, which that ben wiſe, and telleth to hem your cas, and herkeneth what they ſaye in conſeilling, and governe you after hir ſentence. Salomon ſaith; werke all thinges by conſeil, and thou ſhalt never repente.

Than, by conſeil of his wif Prudence, this Melibeus let callen a gret congregation of folk, as ſurgiens, phiſiciens, olde folk and yonge, and ſom of his olde enemies reconciled (as by hir ſemblant) to his love and to his grace: and therwithal ther comen ſome of his neigheboures, that diden him reverence more for drede than for love, as it happeth oft. Ther comen alſo ful many ſubtil flaterers, and wiſe Advocats lerned in the lawe.

And whan thiſe folk togeder aſſembled weren, this Melibeus in ſorweful wiſe ſhewed hem his

cas, and by the manere of his ſpeche, it ſemed that in herte he bare a cruel ire, redy to don vengeaunce upon his foos, and ſodeinly deſired that the werre ſhulde beginne, but natheles yet axed he his conſeil upon this matere. A ſurgien, by licence and aſſent of ſwiche as weren wiſe, up roſe, and unto Melibeus ſayde, as ye moun here.

Sire, (quod he) as to us ſurgiens apperteineth, that we do to every wight the beſte that we can, wher as we ben withholden, and to our patient that we do no damage: wherfore it happeth many time and ofte, that whan twey men han everich wounded other, o ſame ſurgien heleth hem both, wherfore unto our art it is not pertinent to norice werre, ne parties to ſupporte. But certes, as to the wariſhing of youre doughter, al be it ſo that perilouſly ſhe be wounded, we ſhuln do ſo ententif beſineſſe fro day to night, that with the grace of God, ſhe ſhal be hole and ſound, as ſone as is poſſible. Almoſt right in the ſame wiſe the phiſiciens anſwerden, ſave that they ſaiden a fewe wordes more: that right as maladies ben cured by hir contraries, right ſo ſhal man wariſhe werre. His neigheboures ful of envie, his feined frendes that ſemed reconciled, and his flaterers,

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maden ſemblant of weping, and empeired and agregged muchel of this matere, in preyſing gretly Melibee of might, of power, of richeſſe, and of frendes, deſpiſing the power of his adverſaries: and ſaiden outrely, that he anon ſhulde wreken him on his foos, and beginnen werre.

Up roſe than an Advocat that was wiſe, by leve and by conſeil of other that were wiſe, and ſayde: Lordinges, the nede for the which we ben aſſembled in this place, is a ful hevie thing, and an heigh matere, becauſe of the wrong and of the wikkedneſſe that hath be don, and eke by reſon of the grete damages, that in time coming ben poſſible to fallen for the ſame cauſe, and eke by reſon of the gret richeſſe and power of the parties bothe, for the which reſons, it were a ful gret peril to erren in this matere. Wherfore, Melibeus, this is oure ſentence; we conſeille you, aboven alle thing, that right anon thou do thy diligence in keping of thy propre perſone, in ſwiche a wiſe that thou ne want non eſpie ne watche, thy body for to ſave. And after that, we conſeille that in thin hous thou ſette ſuffiſant garniſon, ſo that they moun as wel thy body as thy hous defende. But certes for to meeven werre, ne ſodenly for to do venge-

aunce, we moun not deme in ſo litel time that it were profitable. Wherfore we axen leiſer and ſpace to have deliberation in this cas to deme; for the comune proverbe ſaith thus; He that ſone demeth, ſone ſhal repente. And eke men ſain, that thilke juge is wiſe, that ſone underſtondeth a matere, and jugeth by leiſer. For al be it ſo, that al tarying be anoiful, algates it is not to repreve in yeving of jugement, ne in vengeance taking, whan it is ſuffiſant and reſonable. And that ſhewed our Lord Jeſu Criſt by enſample, for whan that the woman that was taken in advoutrie, was brought in his preſence to knowen what ſhuld be don with hire perſone, al be it that he wiſt wel himſelf what that he wolde anſwere, yet ne wolde he not anſwere ſodeinly, but he wolde have deliberation, and in the ground he wrote twies; and by thiſe cauſes we axen deliberation: and we ſhuln than by the grace of God conſeille the thing that ſhal be profitable.

Up ſterte than the yonge folk at ones, and the moſt partie of that compagnie han ſcorned this olde wiſe man, and begonnen to make noiſe and ſaiden; Right ſo as while that iren is hot men ſhulde ſmite, right ſo men ſhuln do wreken

hir

hir wronges, while that they ben freſhe and newe: and with loude voys they criden werre, werre. Up roſe tho on of thiſe olde wiſe, and with his hand made countenaunce that men ſhuld holde hem ſtille, and yeve him audience. Lordinges, (quod he) ther is ful many a man that crieth werre, werre, that wote ful litel what werre amounteth. Werre at his beginning hath ſo gret an entring and ſo large, that every wight may enter whan him liketh, and lightly find werre: but certes what end that ſhal befalle, it is not light to know. For ſothly whan that werre is ones begonne, ther is ful many a child unborne of his moder, that ſhal ſterve yong, by cauſe of thilke werre, other elles live in ſorwe, and dien in wretchedneſſe: and therfore or that any werre be begonne, men muſt have gret conſeil and gret deliberation. And whan this olde man wende to enforcen his tale by reſons, wel nie alle at ones begonne they to riſe, for to breken his tale, and bidden him ful oft his wordes for to abregge. For ſothly he that precheth to hem that liſten not heren his wordes, his ſermon hem anoieth. For Jeſus Sirak ſayth, that muſike in weping is a noious thing. This is to ſayn, as muche availleth to

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ſpeke beforn folk to which his ſpeche anoieth, as to ſinge beforne him that wepeth. And whan this wiſe man ſaw that him wanted audience, al ſhamefaſt he ſette him doun agein. For Salomon ſaith: ther as thou ne mayſt have non audience, enforce thee not to ſpeke. I ſee wel, (quod this wiſe man) that the comune proverbe is ſoth, that good conſeil wanteth, whan it is moſt nede.

Yet had this Melibeus in his conſeil many folk, that prively in his ere conſeilled him certain thing, and conſeilled him the contrary in general audience. Whan Melibeus had herd that the greteſt partie of his conſeil were accorded that he ſhulde make werre, anon he conſented to hire conſeilling, and fully affermed hir ſentence. Than dame Prudence, whan that ſhe ſaw how that hire hoſbonde ſhope him for to awreke him on his foos, and to beginne werre, ſhe in ful humble wiſe, whan ſhe ſaw hire time, ſayde him theſe wordes: my lord, (quod ſhe) I you beſeche as hertly as I dare and can, ne haſte you not to faſte, and for alle guerdons as yeve me audience. For Piers Alphonſe ſayth; who ſo that doth to thee outher good or harme, haſte thee not to quite it, for in this wiſe thy frend

frend wol abide, and thin enemie ſhal the lenger live in drede. The proverbe ſayth; he haſteth wel that wiſely can abide: and in wikked haſt is no profite.

This Melibee anſwered unto his wif Prudence; I purpoſe not (quod he) to werken by thy conſeil, for many cauſes and reſons: for certes every wight wold hold me than a fool; this is to ſayn, if I for thy conſeilling wolde change thinges, that ben ordeined and affirmed by ſo many wiſe men. Secondly, I ſay, that all women ben wicke, and non good of hem all. For of a thouſand men, ſaith Salomon, I found o good man: but certes of alle women good woman found I never. And alſo certes, if I governed me by thy conſeil, it ſhulde ſeme that I had yeve thee over me the maiſtrie: and God forbede that it ſo were. For Jeſus Sirak ſayth, that if the wif have the maiſtrie, ſhe is contrarious to hire huſbond. And Salomon ſayth; never in thy lif to thy wif, ne to thy childe, ne to thy frend, ne yeve no power over thy ſelf: for better it were that thy children axe of thee thinges that hem nedeth, than thou ſee thy ſelf in the handes of thy children. And alſo if I wol werche by thy conſeilling, certes

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it muſt be ſomtime ſecree, til it were time that it be knowen: and this ne may not be, if I ſhulde be conſeilled by thee. [For it is written; the janglerie of women ne can no thing hide, ſave that which they wote not. After the Philoſophre ſayth; in wikked conſeil women venquiſhen men: and for thiſe reſons I ne owe not to be conſeilled by thee.]

Whan dame Prudence, ful debonairly and with gret pacience, had herd all that hire houſbonde liked for to ſay, than axed ſhe of him licence for to ſpeke, and ſayde in this wiſe. My lord, (quod ſhe) as to your firſt reſon, it may lightly ben anſwerd: for I ſay that it is no folie to chaunge conſeil whan the thing is chaunged, or elles whan the thing ſemeth otherwiſe than it ſemed afore. And moreover I ſay, though that ye have ſworne and behight to performe your empriſe, and nevertheles ye weive to performe thilke ſame empriſe by juſt cauſe, men ſhuld not ſay therfore ye were a lyer, ne forſworn: for the book ſayth, that the wiſe man maketh no leſing, whan he turneth his corage for the better. And al be it that your empriſe be eſtabliſhed and ordeined by gret multitude of folk, yet thar you not accompliſh thilke ordinance but you liketh;

liketh: for the trouthe of thinges, and the profit, ben rather founden in fewe folk that ben wiſe and ful of reſon, than by gret multitude of folk, ther every man cryeth and clattereth what him liketh: ſothly ſwiche multitude is not honeſt. As to the ſecond reſon, wheras ye ſay, that alle women ben wicke: ſave your grace, certes ye deſpiſe alle women in this wiſe, and he that all deſpiſeth, as ſaith the book, all diſpleſeth. And Senek ſaith, that who ſo wol have ſapience, ſhal no man diſpreiſe, but he ſhal gladly teche the ſcience that he can, without preſumption or pride: and ſwiche thinges as he nought can, he ſhal not ben aſhamed to lere hem, and to enquere of leſſe folk than himſelf. And, Sire, that ther hath ben ful many a good woman, may lightly be preved: for certes, Sire, our Lord Jeſu Criſt n'olde never han deſcended to be borne of a woman, if all women had be wicked. And after that, for the gret bountee that is in women, our Lord Jeſu Criſt, whan he was riſen from deth to lif, appered rather to a woman than to his Apoſtles. And though that Salomon ſayde, he found never no good woman, it folweth not therfore, that all women be wicked: for though that he ne found

no

no good woman, certes many another man hath founde many a woman ful good and trewe. Or elles peraventure the entent of Salomon was this, that in ſoveraine bountee he found no woman; this is to ſay, that ther is no wight that hath ſoveraine bountee, ſave God alone, as he himſelf recordeth in his Evangelies. For ther is no creature ſo good, that him ne wanteth ſomwhat of the perfection of God that is his maker. Youre thridde reſon is this; ye ſay that if that ye governe you by my conſeil, it ſhulde ſeme that ye had yeve me the maiſtrie and the lordſhip of your perſon. Sire, ſave your grace, it is not ſo; for if ſo were that no man ſhulde be conſeilled but only of hem that han lordſhip and maiſtrie of his perſon, men n'olde not be conſeilled ſo often: for ſothly thilke man that aſketh conſeil of a purpos, yet hath he free chois whether he wol werke after that conſeil or non. And as to your fourth reſon, ther as ye ſain that the janglerie of women can hide thinges that they wot not; as who ſo ſayth, that a woman can not hide that ſhe wote; Sire, thiſe wordes ben underſtonde of women that ben janglereſſes and wicked; of which women men ſain that three thinges driven a man out of his hous, that is to

ſay,

ſay, ſmoke, dropping of raine, and wicked wives. And of ſwiche women Salomon ſayth, That a man were better dwell in deſert, than with a woman that is riotous. And, ſire, by your leve, that am not I; for ye have ful often aſſaied my gret ſilence and my gret patience, and eke how wel that I can hide and hele thinges, that men oughten ſecretly to hiden. And ſothly as to your fifthe reſon, wheras ye ſay, that in wicked conſeil women venquiſhen men; God wote that thilke reſon ſtant here in no ſtede: for underſtondeth now, ye axen conſeil for to do wickedneſſe; and if ye wol werken wickedneſſe, and your wif reſtraineth thilke wicked purpos, and overcometh you by reſon and by good conſeil, certes your wif ought rather to be preiſed than to be blamed. Thus ſhulde ye underſtonde the philoſophre that ſayth, In wicked conſeil women venquiſhen hir huſbondes. And ther as ye blamen all women and hir reſons, I ſhal ſhewe you by many enſamples, that many women have ben ful good, and yet ben, and hir conſeil holeſome and profitable. Eke ſom men han ſayd, that the conſeil of women is either to dere, or elles to litel of pris. But al be it ſo that ful many a women be bad, and hire conſeil vile and nought

nought worth, yet han men founden ful many a good woman, and discrete and wise in conseilling. Lo, Jacob, thurgh the good conseil of his mother Rebecke, wan the benison of his father, and the lordship over all his brethren. Judith, by hire good conseil, delivered the citee of Bethulie, in which she dwelt, out of the honde of Holofern, that had it beseged, and wolde it al destroye. Abigail delivered Nabal hire housbond fro David the king, that wolde han slain him, and appesed the ire of the king by hire wit, and by hire good conseilling. Hester by hire conseil enhaunced gretly the peple of God, in the regne of Assuerus the king. And the same bountee in good conseilling of many a good woman moun men rede and tell. And further more, whan that oure Lord had created Adam oure forme father, he sayd in this wise; it is not good to be a man allone: make we to him an helpe semblable to himself. Here moun ye see that if that women weren not good, and hir conseil good and profitable, oure Lord God of heven wolde neither han wrought hem, ne called hem helpe of man, but rather confusion of man. And ther sayd a clerk ones in two vers; what is better than gold? Jaspre. What is better

than

than jaſpre? wiſdom. And what is better than wiſdom? woman. And what is better than a good woman? nothing. And, Sire, by many other reſons moun ye ſeen, that many women ben good, and hir conſeil good and profitable. And therfore, Sire, if ye wol troſte to my conſeil, I ſhal reſtore you your doughter hole and ſound: and I wol don to you ſo muche, that ye ſhuln have honour in this cas.

Whan Melibee had herd the wordes of his wif Prudence, he ſayd thus: I ſe wel that the word of Salomon is ſoth; for he ſaith, that wordes, that ben ſpoken diſcretly by ordinaunce, ben honiecombes, for they yeven ſweteneſſe to the ſoule, and holſomneſſe to the body. And, wif, becauſe of thy ſwete wordes, and eke for I have preved and aſſaied thy grete ſapience and thy grete trouthe, I wol governe me by thy conſeil in alle thing.

Now, Sire, (quod dame Prudence) and ſin that ye voucheſafe to be governed by my conſeil, I wol enforme you how that ye ſhuln governe yourſelf, in cheſing of youre conſeillours. Ye ſhuln firſt in alle your werkes mekely beſechen to the heigh God, that he wol be your conſeillour: and ſhapeth you to ſwiche entente

that he yeve you conſeil and comforte, as taught Tobie his ſone; at alle times thou ſhalt bleſſe God, and preie him to dreſſe thy wayes; and loke that alle thy conſeils ben in him for evermore. Seint James eke ſayth; if any of you have nede of ſapience, axe it of God. And afterwarde, than ſhullen ye take conſeil in yourſelf, and examine wel your owen thoughtes, of ſwiche thinges as you thinketh that ben beſt for your profit. And than ſhuln ye drive fro your herte three thinges that ben contrarious to good conſeil; that is to ſayn, ire, coveitiſe, and haſtineſſe.

Firſt, he that axeth conſeil of himſelf, certes he muſt be withouten ire, for many cauſes. The firſt is this: he that hath gret ire and wrath in himſelf, he weneth alway that he may do thing that he may not do. And ſecondly, he that is irous and wroth, he may not wel deme: and he that may not wel deme, may not wel conſeille. The thridde is this; he that is irous and wroth, as ſayth Senek, ne may not ſpeke but blameful thinges, and with his vicious wordes he ſtirreth other folk to anger and to ire. And eke, Sire, ye muſt drive coveitiſe out of your herte. For the Apoſtle ſayth, that coveitiſe

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is the rote of alle harmes. And trosteth wel, that a coveitous man ne can not deme ne thinke, but only to fulfille the ende of his coveitise; and certes that ne may never ben accomplised; for ever the more haboundance that he hath of richesse, the more he desireth. And, Sire, ye must also drive out of youre herte hastinesse: for certes ye ne moun not deme for the beste a soden thought that falleth in youre herte, but ye must avise you on it ful ofte: for as ye have herde herebeforn, the commune proverbe is this; he that sone demeth, sone repenteth.

Sire, ye ne be not alway in like disposition, for certes som thing that somtime semeth to you that it is good for to do, another time it semeth to you the contrarie.

And whan ye han taken conseil in yourself, and han demed by good deliberation swiche thing as you semeth beste, than rede I you that ye kepe it secree. Bewreye not your conseil to no persone, but if so be that ye wenen sikerly, that thurgh youre bewreying youre condition shal ben to you more profitable. For Jesus Sirak saith: neither to thy foo ne to thy frend discover not thy secree, ne thy folie: for they woln yeve you audience and loking, and sup-

portation in youre preſence, and ſcorne you in youre abſence. Another clerk ſayth, that ſcarſly ſhalt thou finden any perſone that may kepe thy conſeil ſecrely. The book ſayth; while that thou kepeſt thy conſeil in thin herte, thou kepeſt it in thy priſon: and whan thou bewreyeſt thy conſeil to any wight, he holdeth thee in his ſnare. And therfore you is better to hide your conſeil in your herte, than to preye him to whom ye han bewreyed youre conſeil, that he wol kepe it cloſe and ſtille. For Seneca ſayth: if ſo be that thou ne mayſt not thin owen conſeil hide, how dareſt thou preyen any other wight thy conſeil ſecrely to kepe? but natheles, if thou wene ſikerly that thy bewreying of thy conſeil to a perſone wol make thy condition to ſtonden in the better plight, than ſhalt thou telle him thy conſeil in this wiſe. Firſt, thou ſhalt make no ſemblant whether thee were lever pees or werre, or this or that; ne ſhewe him not thy will ne thin entente: for troſte wel that communly theſe conſeillours ben flaterers, namely the conſeillours of grete lordes, for they enforcen hem alway rather to ſpeken pleſant wordes enclining to the lordes luſt, than wordes that ben trewe or profitable: and therfore men ſayn,

that

that the riche man hath ſelde good conſeil, but if he have it of himſelf. And after that thou ſhalt conſider thy frendes and thin enemies. And as touching thy frendes, thou ſhalt conſider which of hem ben moſt feithful and moſt wiſe, and eldeſt and moſt appreved in conſeilling: and of hem ſhalt thou axe thy conſeil, as the cas requireth.

I ſay, that firſt ye ſhuln clepe to youre conſeil youre frendes that ben trewe. For Salomon ſaith: that right as the herte of a man deliteth in ſavour that is ſwote, right ſo the conſeil of trewe frendes yeveth ſweteneſſe to the ſoule. He ſayth alſo, ther may nothing be likened to the trewe frend: for certes gold ne ſilver ben not ſo muche worth as the good will of a trewe frend. And eke he ſayth, that a trewe frend is a ſtrong defence; who ſo that it findeth, certes he findeth a gret treſor. Than ſhuln ye eke conſider if that your trewe frendes ben diſcrete and wiſe: for the book ſaith, axe alway thy conſeil of hem that ben wiſe. And by this ſame reſon ſhuln ye clepen to youre conſeil youre frendes that ben of age, ſwiche as han ſeyn and ben expert in many thinges, and ben appreved in conſeillinges. For the book ſayth,

in olde men is al the ſapience, and in longe time the prudence. And Tullius ſayth, that grete thinges ne ben not ay accompliſed by ſtrengthe, ne by deliverneſſe of body, but by good conſeil, by auctoritee of perſones, and by ſcience: the which three thinges ne ben not feble by age, but certes they enforcen and encreſen day by day. And than ſhuln ye kepe this for a general reule. Firſt ye ſhuln clepe to youre conſeil a fewe of youre frendes that ben eſpecial. For Salomon ſaith; many frendes have thou, but among a thouſand cheſe thee on to be thy conſeillour. For al be it ſo, that thou firſt ne telle thy conſeil but to a fewe, thou mayeſt afterwarde tell it to mo folk, if it be nede. But loke alway that thy conſeillours have thilke three conditions that I have ſayd before; that is to ſay, that they be trewe, wiſe, and of olde experience. And werke not alway in every nede by on conſeillour allone: for ſomtime behoveth it to be conſeilled by many. For Salomon ſayth; ſalvation of thinges is wher as ther ben many conſeillours.

Now ſith that I have told you of which folk ye ſhulde be conſeilled: now wol I teche you which conſeil ye ought to eſchue. Firſt ye ſhuln

eſchue

eſchue the conſeilling of fooles; for Salomon ſayth, Take no conſeil of a fool: for he ne can not conſeille but after his owen luſt and his affection. The book ſayth, the propretee of a fool is this: He troweth lightly harme of every man, and lightly troweth all bountee in himſelf. Thou ſhalt eke eſchue the conſeilling of all flaterers, ſwiche as enforcen hem rather to preiſen youre perſone by flaterie, than for to tell you the ſothfaſtneſſe of thinges.

Wherfore Tullius ſayth, Among alle the peſtilences that ben in frendſhip, the greteſt is flaterie. And therfore it is more nede that thou eſchue and drede flaterers, than any other peple. The book ſaith, Thou ſhalt rather drede and flee fro the ſwete wordes of flatering preiſers, than fro the egre wordes of thy frend that ſaith thee ſothes. Salomon ſaith, that the wordes of a flaterer is a ſnare to cacchen innocentes. He ſayth alſo, He that ſpeketh to his frend wordes of ſweteneſſe and of pleſaunce, he ſetteth a net beforne his feet to cacchen him. And therfore ſayth Tullius, Encline not thin eres to flaterers, ne take no conſeil of wordes of flaterie. And Caton ſayth, Aviſe thee wel, and eſchue wordes of ſweteneſſe and of pleſaunce. And eke thou ſhalt eſchue the conſeil-

ling of thin olde enemies that ben reconciled. The book ſayth, that no wight retourneth ſafely into the grace of his olde enemie. And Yſope ſayth, Ne troſt not to hem, to which thou haſt ſomtime had werre or enmitee, ne telle hem not thy conſeil. And Senek telleth the cauſe why. It may not be, ſayth he, ther as gret fire hath long time endured, that ther ne dwelleth ſom vapour of warmneſſe. And therfore ſaith Salomon, In thin olde foo troſt thou never. For ſikerly, though thin enemie be reconciled, and maketh thee chere of humilitee, and louteth to thee with his hed, ne troſt him never: for certes he maketh thilke feined humilitee more for his profite, than for any love of thy perſone; becauſe that he demeth to have victorie over thy perſone by ſwiche feined contenance, the which victorie he might not have by ſtrif of werre. And Peter Alphonſe ſayth; Make no felawſhip with thin olde enemies, for if thou do hem bountee, they wollen perverten it to wickedneſſe. And eke thou muſt eſchue the conſeilling of hem that ben thy ſervaunts, and beren thee gret reverence: for paraventure they fein it more for drede than for love. And therfore ſaith a philoſophre in this wiſe; Ther is no wight parfitly

trewe

trewe to him that he to ſore dredeth. And Tullius ſayth, Ther n'is no might ſo gret of any emperour that longe may endure, but if he have more love of the peple than drede. Thou ſhalt alſo eſchue the conſeilling of folk that ben dronkelewe, for they ne can no conſeil hide. For Salomon ſayth, Ther n'is no privetee ther as regneth dronkenneſſe. Ye ſhuln alſo have in ſuſpect the conſeilling of ſwiche folk as conſeille you o thing prively, and conſeille you the contrarie openly. For Caſſiodore ſayth, That it is a manere ſleighte to hinder his enemy whan he ſheweth to don a thing openly, and werketh prively the contrary. Thou ſhalt alſo have in ſuſpect the conſeilling of wicked folk, for hir conſeil is alway ful of fraude. And David ſayth; Blisful is that man that hath not folwed the conſeilling of ſhrewes. Thou ſhalt alſo eſchue the conſeilling of yonge folk, for hir conſeilling is not ripe, as Salomon ſaith.

Now, Sire, ſith I have ſhewed you of which folk ye ſhullen take youre conſeil, and of which folk ye ſhullen eſchue the conſeil, now wol I teche you how ye ſhuln examine your conſeil after the doctrine of Tullius. In examining than of your conſeillours, ye ſhuln conſidre many thinges.

Alderfirſt

Alderfirſt thou ſhalt conſidre that in thilke thing that thou purpoſeſt, and upon what thing that thou wolt have conſeil, that veray trouthe be ſaid and conſerved; this is to ſay, telle trewely thy tale: for he that ſayth falſe, may not wel be conſeilled in that cas, of which he lieth. And after this, thou ſhalt conſidre the thinges that accorden to that thou purpoſeſt for to do by thy conſeillours, if reſon accord therto, and eke if thy might may atteine therto, and if the more part and the better part of thin conſeillours accorden therto or no. Than ſhalt thou conſidre what thing ſhal folwe of that conſeilling; as hate, pees, werre, grace, profite, or domage, and many other thinges; and in alle thinges thou ſhalt cheſe the beſte, and weive alle other thinges. Than ſhalt thou conſidre of what roote is engendred the matere of thy conſeil, and what fruit it may conceive and engendre. Thou ſhalt eke conſidre alle the cauſes, from whennes they ben ſprongen. And whan thou haſt examined thy conſeil, as I have ſaid, and which partie is the better and more profitable, and haſt appreved it by many wiſe folk and olde, than ſhalt thou conſidre, if thou mayſt performe it and maken of it a good ende. For

certes

certes reſon wol not that any man ſhulde beginne a thing, but if he mighte performe it as him oughte: ne no wight ſhulde take upon him ſo hevy a charge, that he might not beren it. For the proverbe ſayth; he that to muche embraceth diſtreineth litel. And Caton ſaith; aſſay to do ſwiche thinges as thou haſt power to don, leſt the charge oppreſſe thee ſo ſore, that thee behoveth to weive thing that thou haſt begonne. And if ſo be that thou be in doute, whether thou mayſt performe a thing or non, cheſe rather to ſuffre than to beginne. And Peter Alphonſe ſayth; If thou haſt might to don a thing, of which thou muſt repente, it is better nay than ya: this is to ſayn, that thee is better to holde thy tonge ſtille than for to ſpeke. Than mayſt thou underſtonde by ſtronger reſons, that if thou haſt power to performe a werk, of which thou ſhalt repente, than is thee better that thou ſuffre than beginne. Wel ſain they that defenden every wight to aſſaye a thing of which he is in doute, whether he may performe it or non. And after whan ye han examined youre conſeil, as I have ſaid beforne, and knowen wel that ye moun performe your empriſe, conferme it than ſadly til it be at an ende.

Now

Now is it reſon and time that I ſhewe you whan, and wherfore, that ye moun chaunge your conſeil, withouten repreve. Sothly, a man may change his purpos and his conſeil, if the cauſe ceſeth, or whan a newe cas betideth. For the lawe ſaith, that upon thinges that newly betiden, behoveth newe conſeil. And Seneca ſayth; if thy conſeil is comen to the eres of thin enemies, chaunge thy conſeil, Thou mayſt alſo chaunge thy conſeil, if ſo be that thou find that by errour, or by other cauſe, harme or damage may betide. Alſo if thy conſeil be diſhoneſte, other elles come of diſhoneſte cauſe, chaunge thy conſeil: for the lawes ſain, that all beheſtes that ben diſhoneſte ben of no value; and eke, if ſo be that it be impoſſible, or may not goodly be performed or kept.

And take this for a general reule, that every conſeil that is affermed ſo ſtrongly, that it may not be chaunged for no condition that may betide, I ſay that thilke conſeil is wicked.

This Melibeus, whan he had herd the doctrine of his wif dame Prudence, anſwered in this wiſe. Dame, quod he, as yet unto this time ye han wel and covenably taught me, as in general, how I ſhal governe me in the cheſing

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and in the withholding of my conſeillours: but now wold I fain that ye wold condeſcend in eſpecial, and telle me how liketh you, or what ſemeth you by oure conſeillours that we han choſen in oure preſent nede.

My lord, quod ſhe, I beſeche you in alle humbleſſe, that ye wol not wilfully replie agein my reſons, ne diſtempre your herte, though I ſpeke thing that you diſpleſe; for God wote that, as in min entente, I ſpeke it for your beſte, for youre honour and for youre profite eke, and ſothly I hope that youre benignitee wol taken it in patience. And troſteth me wel, quod ſhe, that youre conſeil as in this cas ne ſhulde not (as to ſpeke proprely) be called a conſeilling, but a motion or a meving of folie, in which conſeil ye han erred in many a ſondry wiſe.

Firſt and forward, ye han erred in the aſſembling of youre conſeillours: for ye ſholde firſt han cleped a fewe folk to youre conſeil, and after ye mighte han ſhewed it to mo folk, if it hadde be nede. But certes ye han ſodeinly cleped to your conſeil a gret multitude of peple, ful chargeant and ful anoyous for to here. Alſo ye han erred, for ther as ye ſhulde han only cleped to youre conſeile youre trewe frendes, olde

and

and wife, ye han cleped ſtraunge folk, yonge folk, falſe flaterers, and enemies reconciled, and folk that don you reverence withouten love. And eke ye han erred, for ye han brought with you to youre conſeil ire, coveitiſe, and haſtifneſſe, the which three thinges ben contrary to every conſeil honeſt and profitable: the which three thinges ye ne han not anientiſſed or deſtroyed, neither in youreſelf ne in youre conſeillours, as you ought. Ye han erred alſo, for ye han ſhewed to youre conſeillours youre talent and youre affections to make werre anon, and for to do vengeaunce, and they han eſpied by youre wordes to what thing ye ben enclined: and therfore han they conſeilled you rather to youre talent, than to youre profite. Ye han erred alſo, for it ſemeth that you ſufficeth to han ben conſeilled by thiſe conſeillours only, and with litel avis, wheras in ſo high and ſo gret a nede, it had ben neceſſarie mo conſeillours, and more deliberation to performe your empriſe. Ye han erred alſo, for ye han not examined your conſeil in the foreſaid manere, ne in due manere, as the cas requireth. Ye han erred alſo, for ye han maked no diviſion betwix youre conſeillours; this is to ſayn, betwix youre trewe frendes and youre feined conſeillours:

lours: ne ye han not knowe the wille of your trewe frendes, olde and wiſe, but ye han caſt alle hir wordes in an hochepot, and enclined your herte to the more part and to the greter nombre, and ther be ye condeſcended; and ſith ye wot wel that men ſhuln alway finde a greter nombre of fooles than of wiſe men, and therfore the conſeillings that ben at congregations and multitudes of folk, ther as men take more regard to the nombre, than to the ſapience of perſones, ye ſeen wel, that in ſwiche conſeillings fooles han the maiſtrie. Melibeus anſwered and ſaid agein: I graunte wel that I have erred; but ther as thou haſt told me herebeforne, that he n'is not to blame that chaungeth his conſeil in certain eas, and for certain and juſt cauſes, I am al redy to chaunge my conſeil right as thou wolt deviſe. The proverbe ſayth; for to don ſinne is manniſh, but certes for to perſevere long in ſinne is werke of the Divel.

To this ſentence anſwered anon dame Prudence, and ſaide; examineth (quod ſhe) wel your conſeil, and let us ſee the which of hem han ſpoken moſt reſonably, and taught you beſt conſeil. And for as muche as the examination is neceſſarie, let us beginne at the Surgiens and

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at the Phyſiciens, that firſt ſpaken in this mater. I ſay that Phyſiciens and Surgiens han ſayde you in youre conſeil diſcretly, as hem oughte: and in hir ſpeche ſaiden ful wiſely, that to the office of hem apperteineth to don to every wight honour and profite, and no wight to anoye, and after hir craft to don gret diligence unto the cure of hem which that they han in hir governaunce. And, Sire, right as they han anſwered wiſely and diſcretly, right ſo rede I that they be highly and ſoverainly guerdoned for hir noble ſpeche, and eke for they ſhulden do the more ententif beſineſſe in the curation of thy dere doughter. For al be it ſo that they ben youre frendes, therfore ſhullen ye not ſuffren, that they ſerve you for nought, but ye oughte the rather guerdone hem, and ſhewe hem youre largeſſe. And as touching the propoſition, which the Phyſiciens entreteden in this cas, this is to ſain, that in maladies, that a contrarie is wariſhed by another contrarie; I wold fain knowe how ye underſtonde thilke text, and what is youre ſentence. Certes, quod Melibeus, I underſtond it in this wiſe; that right as they han don me a contrarie, right ſo ſhulde I don hem another; for right as they han venged hem upon me and

don

don me wrong, right ſo ſhal I venge me upon hem, and don hem wrong, and than have I cured a contrarie by another.

Lo, lo, quod dame Prudence, how lightly is every man enclined to his owen deſire and his owen pleſaunce! certes (quod ſhe) the wordes of the Phyſiciens ne ſhulden not han ben underſtonden in that wiſe; for certes wickedneſſe is not contrarie to wickedneſſe, ne vengeaunce to vengeaunce, ne wrong to wrong, but they ben ſemblable: and therfore a vengeaunce is not wariſhed by another vengeaunce, ne a wrong by another wrong, but everich of hem encreſeth and aggreggeth other. But certes the wordes of the Phyſiciens ſhulden ben underſtonde in this wiſe; for good and wickedneſſe ben two contraries, and pees and werre, vengeaunce and ſuffraunce, diſcord and accord, and many other thinges: but certes, wickedneſſe ſhal be wariſhed by goodneſſe, diſcord by accord, werre by pees, and ſo forth of other thinges. And hereto accordeth Seint Poule the Apoſtle in many places: he ſayth, ne yelde not harme for harme, ne wicked ſpeche for wicked ſpeche, but do wel to him that doth to thee harme, and bleſſe him that ſaith to thee

harme. And in many other places he amoneſteth pees and accord. But now wol I ſpeke to you of the conſeil, which that was yeven to you by the men of lawe, and the wiſe folk, and old folke, that ſayden alle by on accord as ye han herd beforne, that over alle thinges ye ſhuln do youre diligence to kepe youre perſone, and to warneſtore your houſe: and ſaiden alſo, that in this cas you oughte for to werchen ful aviſely and with gret deliberation. And, Sire, as to the firſt point, that toucheth the keping of youre perſone, ye ſhuln underſtond, that he that hath werre, ſhal ever more devoutly and mekely preien beforne alle thinges, that Jeſu Criſt of his mercie wol han him in his protection, and ben his ſoveraine helping at his nede: for certes in this world ther is no wight that may be conſeilled ne kept ſuffiſantly, withoute the keping of oure lord Jeſu Criſt. To this ſentence accordeth the Prophete David that ſayth: if God ne kepe the citee, in idel waketh he that kepeth it. Now, Sire, than ſhuln ye committe the keping of youre perſone to youre trewe frendes, that ben appreved and yknowe, and of hem ſhuln ye axen helpe, youre perſone for to kepe. For Caton ſaith: if thou

have nede of helpe, axe it of thy frendes, for ther n'is non ſo good a Phyſicien as thy trewe frend. And after this than ſhuln ye kepe you fro alle ſtraunge folk, and fro lieres, and have alway in ſuſpect hir compaignie. For Piers Alphonſe ſayth: ne take no compaignie by the way of a ſtraunge man, but if ſo be that thou have knowen him of lenger time: and if ſo be that he falle into thy compaignie paraventure withouten thin aſſent, enquere than, as ſubtilly as thou maiſt, of his converſation, and of his liſ beforne, and feine thy way, ſaying thou wolt go thider as thou wolt not go: and if he bere a ſpere, hold thee on the right ſide, and if he bere a ſwerd, hold thee on his left ſide. And after this than ſhuln ye kepe you wiſely from all ſwiche manere peple as I have ſayed before, and hem and hir conſeil eſchue. And after this than ſhuln ye kepe you in ſwiche manere, that for any preſumption of youre ſtrengthe, that ye ne deſpiſe not, ne account not the might of your adverſary ſo lite, that ye let the keping of youre perſone for your preſumption; for every wiſe man dredeth his enemie. And Salomon ſayth; welful is he that of alle hath drede; For certes he that thurgh

the hardineſſe of his herte, and thurgh the hardineſſe of himſelf, hath to gret preſumption, him ſhal evil betide. Than ſhuln ye evermo countrewaite emboyſſements, and alle eſpiaile. For Senek ſayth, that the wiſe man that dredeth harmes, eſchueth harmes; ne he ne falleth into perils, that perils eſchueth. And al be it ſo, that it ſeme that thou art in ſiker place, yet ſhalt thou alway do thy diligence in keping of thy perſone; this is to ſayn, ne be not negligent to kepe thin perſone, not only fro thy greteſt enemy, but alſo fro thy leſte enemy. Senek ſayth; a man that is wel aviſed, he dredeth his leſte enemie. Ovide ſayth, that the litel weſel wol ſlee the gret boll and the wilde hart. And the book ſayth; a litel thorne may prikke a king ful ſore, and a litel hound wol hold the wilde bore. But natheles, I ſay not thou ſhalt be ſo coward, that thou doute wher as is no drede. The book ſaith, that ſom men [han taught hir deceivour, for they han to muche dreded] to be deceived. Yet ſhalt thou drede to be empoyſoned; and [therfore ſhalt thou] kepe thee fro the compagnie of ſcorners: for the book ſayth, with ſcorners ne make no compagnie, but flee hir wordes as venime.

Now

Now as to the ſecond point, wheras youre wiſe conſeillours conſeilled you to warneſtore your hous with gret diligence, I wolde fain knowe how that ye underſtode thilke wordes, and what is youre ſentence.

Melibeus anſwered and ſaide; Certes I underſtond it in this wiſe, that I ſhal warneſtore min hous with toures, ſwiche as han caſtelles and other manere edifices, and armure, and artelries, by which thinges I may my perſone and myn hous ſo kepen and defenden, that min enemies ſhuln ben in drede min hous for to approche.

To this ſentence anſwered anon Prudence. Warneſtoring (quod ſhe) of heighe toures and of grete edifices, is with grete coſtages and with grete travaille; and whan that they ben accompliced, yet ben they not worth a ſtre, but if they ben defended by trewe frendes, that ben olde and wiſe. And underſtonde wel, that the greteſte and ſtrongeſte garneſon that a riche man may have, as wel to kepen his perſone as his goodes, is, that he be beloved with his ſubgets, and with his neigheboures. For thus ſayth Tullius, that ther is a maner garneſon, that no man may venquiſh ne diſcomfite, and that is

a lord to be beloved of his citizeins, and of his peple.

Now, Sire, as to the thridde point, wheras youre olde and wiſe conſeillours ſayden, that you ne oughte not ſodeinly ne haſtily proceden in this nede, but that you oughte purveyen and appareilen you in this cas, with gret diligence and gret deliberation; trewely, I trowe, that they ſayden right wiſely and right ſoth. For Tullius ſayth: in every nede er thou beginne it, appareile thee with gret diligence. Than ſay I, that in vengeaunce taking, in werre, in bataille, and in warneſtoring, er thou beginne, I rede that thou appareile thee therto, and do it with gret deliberation. For Tullius ſayth, that longe appareiling tofore the bataille, maketh ſhort victorie. And Caſſiodorus ſayth: the garneſon is ſtronger, whan it is longe time aviſed.

But now let us ſpeken of the conſeil that was accorded by youre neigheboures, ſwiche as don you reverence withouten love; youre olde enemies reconciled; your flatereres, that conſeilled you certain thinges prively, and openly conſeilled you the contrarie; the yonge folk alſo, that conſeilled you to venge you, and to make werre anon. Certes, Sire, as I have ſayde beforne,

forne, ye han gretly erred to han cleped ſwiche maner folk to youre conſeil, which conſeillours ben ynough reproved by the reſons aforeſaid. But natheles, let us now deſcende to the ſpecial. Ye ſhul firſt proceden after the doctrine of Tullius. Certes the trouthe of this matere or of this conſeil nedeth not diligently to enquere, for it is wel wiſt, which they ben that han don to you this treſpas and vilanie, and how many treſpaſours, and in what manere they han don to you all this wrong, and all this vilanie. And after this, than ſhuln ye examine the ſecond condition, which that the ſame Tullius addeth in this matere. For Tullius putteth a thing, which that he clepeth conſenting: this is to ſayn, who ben they, and which ben they, and how many, that conſenten to thy conſeil in thy wilfulneſſe, to don haſtif vengeaunce. And let us conſidre alſo who ben they, and how many ben they, and which ben they, that conſenteden to youre adverſaries. As to the firſt point, it is wel knowen which folk they be that conſenteden to youre wilfulneſſe. For trewely, all tho that conſeileden you to maken ſodein werre, ne ben not youre frendes. Let us now conſidre which ben they that ye holden ſo gretly youre frendes, as to

youre perſone: for al be it ſo that ye be mighty and riche, certes ye ne ben but allone: for certes ye ne han no child but a doughter, ne ye ne han no brethren, ne coſins germains, ne non other nigh kinrede, wherfore that youre enemies for drede ſhulde ſtinte to plede with you, or to deſtroye youre perſone. Ye knowen alſo, that your richeſſes moten ben diſpended in diverſe parties; and whan that every wight hath his part, they ne wollen taken but litel regard to venge youre deth. But thin enemies ben three, and they han many brethren, children, coſins, and other nigh kinrede: and though ſo were, that thou haddeſt ſlain of hem two or three, yet dwellen ther ynow to wreken hir deth, and to ſlee thy perſone. And though ſo be that youre kinrede be more ſtedefaſt and ſiker than the kin of your adverſaries, yet natheles youre kinrede is but a fer kinrede; they ben but litel ſibbe to you, and the kin of youre enemies ben nigh ſibbe to hem. And certes as in that, hir condition is better than youres. Than let us conſidre alſo of the conſeilling of hem that conſeilled you to take ſodein vengeance, whether it accorde to reſon: and certes, ye knowe wel, nay; for as by right and reſon, ther may no man taken vengeaunce on no wight,

wight, but the juge that hath the juriſdiction of it, whan it is ygraunted him to take thilke vengeaunce haſtily, or attemprely, as the lawe requireth. And yet moreover of thilke word that Tullius clepeth conſenting, thou ſhalt conſidre, if thy might and thy power may conſente and ſuffice to thy wilfulneſſe, and to thy conſeillours: and certes, thou mayeſt wel ſay, that nay; for ſikerly, as for to ſpeke proprely, we moun do nothing but only ſwiche thing as we moun don rightfully: and certes rightfully ye ne mowe take no vengeance, as of youre propre auctoritee. Than mowe ye ſen that your power ne conſenteth not, ne accordeth not to youre wilfulneſſe. Now let us examine the thridde point, that Tullius clepeth conſequent. Thou ſhalt uuderſtonde, that the vengeaunce that thou purpoſeſt for to take, is the conſequent, and therof folweth another vengeance, peril, and werre, and other damages withouten nombre, of which we ben not ware, as at this time. And as touching the fourthe point, that Tullius clepeth engendring, thou ſhalt conſider, that this wrong which that is don to thee, is engendred of the hate of thin enemies, and of the vengeaunce taking upon that wold engender another vengeaunce, and muchel

muchel ſorwe and waſting of rieheſſes, as I ſayde ere.

Now, ſire, as to the point, that Tullius clepeth cauſes, which that is the laſt point, thou ſhalt underſtonde, that the wrong that thou haſt received, hath certaine cauſes, which that clerkes clepen *oriens*, and *efficiens*, and *cauſa longinqua*, and *cauſa propinqua*, this is to ſayn, the fer cauſe, and the nigh cauſe. The fer cauſe is almighty God, that is cauſe of alle thinges; the ner cauſe, is thin three enemies; the cauſe accidental was hate; the cauſe material, ben the five woundes of thy doughter; the cauſe formal, is the maner of hir werking, that broughten ladders, and clomben in at thy windowes; the cauſe final was for to ſlee thy doughter; it letted not in as muche as in hem was. But for to ſpeke of the fer cauſe, as to what ende they ſhuln come, or what ſhal finally betide of hem in this cas, ne can I not deme, but by conjecting and ſuppoſing: for we ſhuln ſuppoſe, that they ſhuln come to a wicked ende, becauſe that the book of Decrees ſayth: Selden or with gret peine ben cauſes ybrought to a good ende, whan they ben badly begonne.

Now, Sire, if men wold axen me, why that God ſuffred men to do you this vilanie, certes I can

can not wel anſwer, as for no ſothfaſtneſſe. For the Apoſtle ſayth, that the ſciences, and the jugements of oure Lord God Almighty ben ful depe; ther may no man comprehend ne ſerche hem ſuffiſantly. Natheles, by certain preſumptions and conjectings, I hold and beleve, that God, which that is ful of juſtice and of right-wiſeneſſe, hath ſuffered this betide, by juſt cauſe reſonable.

Thy name is Melibee, this is to ſayn, a man that drinketh hony. Thou haſt dronke ſo muche hony of ſwete temporel richeſſes, and delices, and honours of this world, that thou art dronken, and haſt forgetten Jeſu Criſt thy creatour: thou ne haſt not don to him ſwiche honour and reverence as thee ought, ne thou ne haſt wel ytaken kepe to the wordes of Ovide, that ſayth: Under the honey of the goodes of thy body is hid the venime that ſleth the ſoule. And Salomon ſayth: If thou haſt founden hony, ete of it that ſufficeth; for if thou ete of it out of meſure, thou ſhalt ſpewe, and be nedy and poure. And peraventure Criſt hath thee in deſpit, and hath tourned away fro thee his face, and his eres of miſericorde; and alſo he hath ſuffred, that thou haſt ben puniſhed in the manere that thou haſt ytreſpaſed.

ytreſpaſed. Thou haſt don ſinne again oure Lord Criſt, for certes the three enemies of mankind, that is to ſayn, the fleſh, the fend, and the world, thou haſt ſuffred hem entre into thin herte wilfully, by the windowes of thy body, and haſt not defended thyſelf ſuffiſantly agein hir aſſautes, and hir temptations, ſo that they han wounded thy ſoule in five places, this is to ſayn the dedly ſinnes that ben entred into thyn herte by thy five wittes: and in the ſame manere our Lord Criſt hath wold and ſuffred, that thy three enemies ben entred into thyn hous by the windowes, and han ywounded thy doughter in the foreſayd manere.

Certes, quod Melibee, I ſee wel that ye enforce you muchel by wordes to overcomen me, in ſwiche manere, that I ſhal not venge me on mine enemies, ſhewing me the perils and the evils that mighten falle of this vengeaunce: but who ſo wolde conſidre in alle vengeaunces the perils and evils that mighten ſue of vengeaunce taking, a man wold never take vengeaunce, and that were harme: for by the vengeaunce taking ben the wicked men diſſevered fro the goode men. And they that han will to do wickedneſſe, reſtreinen hir wicked purpos, whan they

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A, ſayd

A, ſayd Melibee, this vengeaunce liketh me nothing. I bethink me now, and take hede how that fortune hath noriſhed me fro my childhode, and hath holpen me to paſſe many a ſtronge pas: now wol I aſſayen hire, trowing, with Goddes helpe, that ſhe ſhal helpe me my ſhame for to venge.

Certes, quod Prudence, if ye wol werke by my conſeil, ye ſhuln not aſſaye fortune by no way: ne ye ne ſhuln not lene or bowe unto hire, after the wordes of Senek; for thinges that ben folily don, and tho that ben don in hope of fortune, ſhuln never come to good ende. And as the ſame Senek ſayth: The more clere and the more ſhining that fortune is, the more brotel and the ſoner broke ſhe is. Truſteth not in hire, for ſhe n'is not ſtedefaſt ne ſtable: for whan thou troweſt to be moſt ſiker and ſeure of hire helpe, ſhe wol faille and deceive thee. And wheras ye ſayn, that fortune hath noriſhed you fro youre childhode, I ſay that in ſo muchel ye ſhuln the leſſe truſte in hire, and in hire wit. For Senek ſaith: What man that is noriſhed by fortune, ſhe maketh him a gret fool. Now than ſin ye deſire and axe vengeaunce, and the vengeaunce, that is don after the lawe and before the juge, ne liketh

liketh you not, and the vengeaunce, that is don in hope of fortune, is perilous and uncertain, than have ye non other remedie, but for to have your recours unto the ſoveraine juge, that vengeth alle vilanies, and wronges; and he ſhal venge you, after that himſelf witneſſeth, wheras he ſaith; Leveth the vengeaunce to me, and I ſhal do it.

Melibeus anſwered: If I ne venge me of the vilanie that men han don to me, I ſompne or warne hem, that han don to me vilanie, and alle other, to do me another vilanie. For it is written; If thou take no vengeaunce of an olde vilany, thou ſompneſt thin adverſaries to do thee a newe vilanie: and alſo for my ſuffraunce, men wolden do me ſo muche vilanie, that I might neither bere it ne ſuſteine; and ſo ſhulde I ben put and holden over lowe. For ſom men ſain, In muchel ſuffring ſhul many thinges falle unto thee, which thou ſhalt not mowe ſuffre.

Certes, quod Prudence, I graunte you wel, that overmuchel ſuffraunce is not good, but yet ne folweth it not therof, that every perſone to whom men don vilanie, ſhuld take of it vengeaunce: for that apperteineth and longeth all only to the juges, for they ſhul venge the vilanies and injuries;

injuries: and therfore tho two auctoritees, that ye han ſayd above, ben only underſtonden in the juges: for whan they ſuffren overmuchel the wronges and vilanies to be don, withouten puniſhing, they ſompne not a man all only for to do newe wronges, but they commaunden it: al ſo as a wiſe man ſayth, that the juge that correcteth not the ſinner, commaundeth and biddeth him do ſinne. And the juges and ſoveraines mighten in hir lond ſo muche ſuffre of the ſhrewes and miſdoers, that they ſhulden by ſwiche ſuffraunce, by proces of time, wexen of ſwiche power and might, that they ſhuld putte out the juges and the ſoveraines from hir places, and atte laſte maken hem leſe hir lordſhippes.

But now let us putte, that ye have leve to venge you: I ſay ye be not of might and power, as now to venge you: for if ye wol maken compariſon unto the might of youre adverſaries, ye ſhuln finde in many thinges, that I have ſhewed you er this, that hir condition is better than youres, and therfore ſay I, that it is good as now, that ye ſuffre and be patient.

Forthermore ye knowen wel, that after the commune ſaw, it is a woodneſſe, a man to ſtrive with a ſtronger, or a more mighty man than he is himſelf;

himſelf; and for to ſtrive with a man of even ſtrengthe, that is to ſay, with as ſtrong a man as he is, it is peril; and for to ſtrive with a weker man, it is folie; and therfore ſhulde a man flee ſtriving, as muchel as he mighte. For Salomon ſayth: It is a gret worſhip to a man to kepe him fro noiſe and ſtrif. And if it ſo happe, that a man of greter mighte and ſtrengthe than thou art, do thee grevaunce: ſtudie and beſie thee rather to ſtille the ſame grevaunce, than for to venge thee. For Senek ſayth, that he putteth him in a grete peril, that ſtriveth with a greter man than he is himſelf. And Caton ſayth; If a man of higher eſtat or degree, or more mighty than thou, do thee anoye or grevance, ſuffre him: for he that ones hath greved thee, may another time releve thee and helpe thee. Yet ſette I cas, ye have bothe might and licence for to venge you, I ſay that ther ben ful many thinges that ſhuln reſtreine you of vengeance taking, and make you for to encline to ſuffre, and for to han patience in the wronges that han ben don to you. Firſt and forward, if ye wol conſidre the defautes that ben in youre owen perſone, for which defautes God hath ſuffred you have this tribulation, as I have ſayd to you herebeforne. For

the Poete ſayth, that we oughten patiently taken the tribulations that comen to us, whan that we thinken and conſideren, that we han deſerved to have hem. And Seint Gregorie ſayth, that whan a man conſidereth wel the nombre of his defautes and of his ſinnes, the peines and the tribulations that he ſuffereth, ſemen the leſſe unto him. And in as muche as him thinketh his ſinnes more hevy and grevous, in ſo muche ſemeth his peine the lighter and the eſier unto him. Alſo ye owen to encline and bowe youre herte, to take the patience of oure Lord Jeſu Criſt, as ſayth Seint Peter in his Epiſtles. Jeſu Criſt (he ſaith) hath ſuffred for us, and yeven enſample to every man to folwe and ſue him, for he dide never ſinne, ne never came ther a vilains word out of his mouth. Whan men curſed him, he curſed hem nought; and whan men beten him, he manaced hem nought. Alſo the gret patience, which Seintes that ben in Paradis han had in tribulations that they han ſuffred, withouten hir deſert or gilt, oughte muchel ſtirre you to patience. Forthermore, ye ſhulde enforce you to have patience, conſidering that the tribulations of this world but litel while endure, and ſone paſſed ben and gon, and the joye that a

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man ſeketh to han by patience in tribulations is perdurable; after that the Apoſtle ſayth in his Epiſtle; the joye of God, he ſayth, is perdurable, that is to ſayn, everlaſting. Alſo troweth and beleveth ſtedfaſtly, that he n'is not wel ynoriſhed ne wel ytaught, that cannot have patience, or wol not receive patience. For Salomon ſayth, that the doctrine and wit of a man is knowen by patience. And in another place he ſayeth, that he that is patient, governeth him by gret prudence. And the ſame Salomon ſaith: The angrie and wrathful man maketh noiſes, and the patient man attempreth and ſtilleth hem. He ſaith alſo, It is more worth to be patient than for to be right ſtrong. And he that may have the lordſhipe of his owen herte, is more to preiſe, than he that by his force or ſtrengthe taketh gret citees. And therfore ſayth Seint James in his Epiſtle, that patience is a gret vertue of perfection.

Certes, quod Melibee, I graunte you, Dame Prudence, that patience is a gret vertue of perfection, but every man may not have the perfection that ye ſeken, ne I am not of the nombre of the right parfit men: for min herte may never be in pees, unto the time it be venged. And al be it ſo, that it was gret peril to min

enemies to do me a vilanie in taking vengeaunce upon me, yet token they non hede of the peril, but fulfilleden hir wicked will and hir corage: and therfore me thinketh men oughten not repreve me, though I put me in a litel peril for to venge me, and though I do a gret exceſſe, that is to ſayn, that I venge on outrage by another.

A, quod dame Prudence, ye ſayn your will and as you liketh; but in no cas of the world a man ſhulde not don outrage ne exceſſe, for to vengen him. For Caſſiodore ſayth, that as evil doth he that vengeth him by outrage, as he that doth the outrage. And therfore ye ſhuln venge you after the ordre of right, that is to ſayn, by the lawe, and not by exceſſe, ne by outrage. And alſo if ye wol venge you of the outrage of youre adverſaries, in other manere than right commaundeth, ye ſinnen. And therfore ſayth Senek, that a man ſhal never venge ſhrewedneſſe by ſhrewedneſſe. And if ye ſay that right axeth a man to defende violence by violence, and fighting by fighting: certes ye ſay ſoth, whan the defence is don withouten intervalle, or withouten tarying or delay, for to defende him, and not for to venge. And it behoveth, that a man putte ſwiche attemperaunce in his defence,

fence, that men have no cauſe ne mater to repreve him, that defendeth him, of outrage and exceſſe, for elles were it againe reſon. Parde ye knowen wel, that ye maken no defence as now, for to defende you, but for to venge you: and ſo ſheweth it, that ye han no will to do youre dede attemprely: and therfore me thinketh that patience is good. For Salomon ſayth, that he that is not patient, ſhal have gret harme.

Certes, quod Melibee, I graunte you, that whan a man is impatient and wrothe of that that toucheth him not, and that apperteineth not unto him, though it harme him it is no wonder. For the lawe ſaith, that he is coupable that entremeteth or medleth with ſwiche thing, as apperteineth not unto him. And Salomon ſaith, that he that entremeteth of the noiſe or ſtrif of another man, is like to him that taketh a ſtraunge hound by the eres: for right as he that taketh a ſtraunge hound by the eres is otherwhile bitten with the hound, right in the ſame wiſe, it is reſon that he have harme, that by his impatience medleth him of the noiſe of another man, wheras it apperteineth not unto him. But ye knowe wel, that this dede, that is to ſayn, my greef and my diſeſe, toucheth me right nigh. And therfore

though I be wroth and impatient, it is no mervaille: and (ſaving your grace) I cannot ſee that it might gretly harme me, though I took vengeaunce, for I am richer and more mighty than min enemies ben: and wel knowe ye, that by money and by having grete poſſeſſions, ben alle thinges of this world governed. And Salomon ſayth, that alle thinges obeye to money.

Whan Prudence had herd hire huſbond avaunte him of his richeſſe and of his money, diſpreiſing the power of his adverſaries, ſhe ſpake and ſayd in this wiſe: Certes, dere Sire, I graunte you that ye ben riche and mighty, and that richeſſes ben good to hem that han wel ygeten hem, and that wel conne uſen hem. For right as the body of a man may not liven withouten ſoul, no more may it liven withouten temporel goodes, and by richeſſes may a man gete him grete frendes. And therfore ſayth Pamphilus: If a netherdes doughter (he ſayth) be riche, ſhe may cheſe of a thouſand men, which ſhe wol take to hire huſbond: for of a thouſand men on wol not forſaken hire ne refuſen hire. And this Pamphilus ſaith alſo: If thou be right happy, that is to ſayn, if thou be right riche, thou ſhalt finde a gret nombre of

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felawes and frendes; and if thy fortune chaunge, that thou wexe poure, farewel frendſhipe and felawſhipe, for thou ſhalt be al allone withouten any compaignie, but if it be the compaignie of poure folk. And yet ſayth this Pamphilus moreover, that they that ben bond and thralle of linage, ſhuln be made worthy and noble by richeſſes. And right ſo as by richeſſes ther comen many goodes, right ſo by poverte come ther many harmes and eviles: for gret poverte conſtreineth a man to do many eviles. And therfore clepeth Caſſiodore poverte the moder of ruine, that is to ſayn, the moder of overthrowing or falling doun. And therfore ſayth Piers Alfonſe: on of the greteſt adverſitees of this world, is whan a free man by kinde, or of birthe, is conſtreined by poverte to eten the almeſſe of his enemie. And the ſame ſayth Innocent in on of his bookes: he ſayth, that forweful and miſhappy is the condition of a poure begger, for if he axe not his mete, he dieth for hunger, and if he axe, he dieth for ſhame: and algates neceſſitee conſtreineth him to axe. And therfore ſayth Salomon, that better it is to die, than for to have ſwiche poverte. And as the ſame Salomon ſayth: Better it is to die of bitter deth, than

for to liven in ſwiche wiſe. By thiſe reſons that I have ſaid unto you, and by many other reſons that I coude ſaye, I graunte you that richeſſes ben good to hem that wel geten hem, and to hem that wel uſen tho richeſſes: and therfore wol I ſhewe you how ye ſhuln behave you in gadering of youre richeſſes, and in what manere ye ſhuln uſen hem.

Firſt, ye ſhuln geten hem withouten gret deſir, by good leiſer, ſokingly, and not over haſtifly, for a man that is to deſiring to gete richeſſes, abandoneth him firſt to theſte and to alle other eviles. And therfore ſayth Salomon: He that haſteth him to beſily to wexe riche, he ſhal be non innocent. He ſayth alſo, that the richeſſe that haſtily cometh to a man, ſone and lightly goeth and paſſeth from a man, but that richeſſe that cometh litel and litel, wexeth alway and multiplieth. And, Sire, ye ſhulen gete richeſſes by youre wit and by youre travaille, unto youre profite, and that withouten wrong or harme doing to any other perſone. For the lawe ſayth: Ther maketh no man himſelf riche, if he do harme to another wight; this is to ſay, that nature defendeth and forbedeth by right, that no man make himſelf riche, unto the harme

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of another perſone. And Tullius ſayth, that no ſorwe, ne no drede of deth, ne nothing that may falle unto a man, is ſo muchel ageins nature, as a man to encreſe his owen profite, to harme of another man. And though the grete men and the mighty men geten richeſſes more lightly than thou, yet ſhalt thou not ben idel ne ſlowe to do thy profite, for thou ſhalt in alle wiſe flee idelneſſe. For Salomon ſayth, that idelneſſe techeth a man to do many eviles. And the ſame Salomon ſayth, that he that travailleth and beſieth him to tillen his lond, ſhal ete bred: but he that is idel, and caſteth him to no beſineſſe ne occupation, ſhal falle into poverte, and die for hunger. And he that is idel and ſlow, can never find covenable time for to do his profite. For ther is a verſifiour ſayth, that the idel man excuſeth him in Winter, becauſe of the grete cold, and in Sommer by encheſon of the hete. For thiſe cauſes, ſayth Caton, waketh, and enclineth you not over muchel to ſlepe, for over muchel reſte noriſheth and cauſeth many vices. And therfore ſayth Seint Jerome; Doeth ſom good dedes, that the devil which is oure enemie, ne finde you not unoccupied, for the devil ne taketh not lightly unto his werking ſwiche as he findeth occupied in goode werkes.

Than

Than thus in geting richeſſes ye muſten flee idelneſſe. And afterward ye ſhuln uſen the richeſſes, which ye han geten by youre wit and by youre travaille, in ſwiche manere, that men holde you not to ſcarce ne to ſparing, ne foollarge, that is to ſay, over large a ſpender: for right as men blamen an avaricious man, becauſe of his ſcarcitee and chincherie, in the ſame wiſe is he to blame, that ſpendeth over largely. And therfore ſaith Caton: Uſe (ſayth he) the richeſſes that thou haſt ygeten in ſwiche manere, that men have no matere ne cauſe to calle thee nother wretche ne chinche: for it is a gret ſhame to a man to have a poure herte and a riche purſe. He ſayth alſo: the goodes that thou haſt ygeten, uſe hem by meſure, that is to ſayn, ſpende meſurably; for they that folily waſten and diſpenden the goodes that they han, whan they han no more propre of hir owen, than they ſhapen hem to take the goodes of another man. I ſay than that ye ſhuln flee avarice, uſing youre richeſſes in ſwiche manere, that men ſayn not that your richeſſes ben yberied, but that ye have hem in youre might, and in youre welding. For a wiſe man repreveth the avaricious man, and ſayth thus in two vers. Wherto and why berieth a

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man his goodes by his gret avarice, and knoweth wel, that nedes muſt he die, for deth is the end of every man, as in this preſent lif? and for what cauſe or encheſon joineth he him, or knitteth he him ſo faſt unto his goodes, that alle his wittes mown not diſſeveren him, or departen him from his goodes, and knoweth wel, or oughte to knowe, that whan he is ded, he ſhal nothing bere with him out of this world? And therfore ſayth Seint Auguſtine, that the avaricious man is likened unto helle, that the more it ſwalweth, the more deſir it hath to ſwalwe and devoure. And as wel as ye wolde eſchue to be called an avaricious man or chinche, as wel ſhulde ye kepe you and governe you in ſwiche a wiſe, that men calle you not fool-large. Therfore ſaith Tullius: The goodes of thin hous ne ſhulde not ben hid ne kept ſo cloſe, but that they might ben opened by pitee and debonairetee; that is to ſayn, to yeve hem part that han gret nede; ne thy goodes ſhulden not ben ſo open, to be every mannes goodes. Afterward, in geting of youre richeſſes, and in uſing of hem, ye ſhuln alway have three thinges in youre herte, that is to ſay, oure Lord God, conſcience, and good name. Firſt, ye ſhuln have God in youre herte, and for

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no richeſſe ye ſhuln do no thing, which may in any manere diſpleſe God that is your creatour and maker. For after the word of Salomon, it is better to have a litel good with love of God, than to have muchel good, and leſe the love of his Lord God. And the Prophete ſayth, That better it is to ben a good man, and have litel good and treſor, than to be holden a ſhrewe, and have grete richeſſes. And yet I ſay forthermore, that ye ſhulden alway do youre beſineſſe to gete you richeſſes, ſo that ye gete hem with good conſcience. And the Apoſtle ſayth, that ther n'is thing in this world of which we ſhulden have ſo gret joye, as whan oure conſcience bereth us good witneſſe. And the Wiſe man ſayth: The ſubſtaunce of a man is ful good, whan ſinne is not in mannes conſcience. Afterward, in geting of youre richeſſes, and in uſing of hem, ye muſt have gret beſineſſe and gret diligence, that youre good name be alway kept and conſerved. For Salomon ſayth, that beter it is, and more it availeth a man to have a good name, than for to have grete richeſſes: and therfore he ſayth in another place: Do grete diligence (ſaith Salomon) in keping of thy frendes, and of thy good name, for it ſhal lenger abide with thee, than any tre-

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ſor, be it never ſo precious. And certes, he ſhulde not be called a Gentilman, that after God and good conſcience, alle thinges left, ne doth his diligence and beſineſſe, to kepen his good name. And Caſſiodore ſayth, that it is a ſigne of a gentil herte, whan a man loveth and deſireth to have a good name. And therfore ſayth Seint Auguſtine, that ther ben two thinges that arn right neceſſarie and nedeful; and that is good conſcience, and good los; that is to ſayn, good conſcience to thin owen perſone inward, and good los for thy neighebour outward. And he that troſteth him ſo muchel in his good conſcience, that he deſpiſeth and ſetteth at nought his good name or los, and recketh not though he kepe not his good name, n'is but a cruel cherl.

Sire, now have I ſhewed you how ye ſhulden do in geting richeſſes, and how ye ſhuln uſen hem: and I ſee wel that for the truſt that ye han in youre richeſſes, ye wiln meve werre and bataille. I conſeille you that ye beginne no bataille ne werre, in truſt of youre richeſſes, for they ne ſufficen not werres to mainteine. And therfore ſayth a Philoſophre: That man that deſireth and wol algates han werre, ſhal never have ſuffiſaunce: for the richer that he is, the greter

diſpences

dispences must he make, if he wol have worship and victorie. And Salomon saith, that the greter richesses that a man hath, the mo dispendours he hath. And, dere Sire, al be it so, that for your richesses ye moun have muchel folk, yet behoveth it not, ne it is not good to beginne werre, wheras ye moun in other manere have pees, unto youre worship and profite: for the victorie of batailles that ben in this world, lith not in gret nombre or multitude of peple, ne in the vertue of man, but it lith in the will and in the hond of oure Lord God almighty. And therfore Judas Machabeus, which was Goddes knight, whan he shulde fighte again his adversarie, that hadde a greter nombre and a greter multitude of folk, and strenger than was the peple of this Machabee, yet he recomforted his litel compaignie, and sayde right in this wise: Al so lightly (sayde he) may our Lord God almighty yeve victorie to a fewe folk, as to many folk; for the victorie of a bataille cometh not by the gret nombre of peple, but it cometh from oure Lord God of heven. And, dere Sire, for as muchel as ther is no man certaine, if it be worthy that God yeve him victorie or not, after that Salomon sayth, therfore every man shulde gretly

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drede werres to beginne: and becauſe that in batailles fallen many perils, and it happeth other while, that as ſone is the gret man ſlain, as the litel man; and, as it is ywritten in the ſecond book of Kinges, the dedes of batailles ben aventurous, and nothing certain, for as lightly is on hurt with a ſpere, as another; and for ther is gret peril in werre; therfore ſhulde a man flee and eſchue werre in as muchel as a man may goodly. For Salomon ſayth: He that loveth peril, ſhal falle in peril.

After that Dame Prudence had ſpoken in this manere, Melibee anſwerd and ſaide: I ſee wel, dame Prudence, that by youre faire wordes and by youre reſons, that ye han ſhewed me, that the werre liketh you nothing: but I have not yet herd your conſeil, how I ſhal do in this nede.

Certes, quod ſhe, I conſeille you that ye accorde with youre adverſaries, and that ye have pees with hem. For Seint James ſayth in his Epiſtle, that by concorde and pees, the ſmale richeſſes wexen grete, and by debat and diſcorde grete richeſſes fallen doun. And ye knowen wel, that on of the greteſt and moſte ſoveraine thing that is in this world, is unitee and pees. And

therfore

therfore ſayde oure Lord Jeſu Criſt to his Apoſtles in this wiſe: Wel happy and bleſſed ben they that loven and purchaſen pees, for they ben called the children of God. A, quod Melibee, now ſee I wel, that ye loven not min honour, ne my worſhipe. Ye knowen wel that min adverſaries han begonne this debat and brige by hir outrage, and ye ſee wel, that they ne requeren ne prayen me not of pees, ne they axen not to be reconciled; wol ye than that I go and meke me, and obeye me to hem, and crie hem mercie? Forſoth that were not my worſhipe: for right as men ſayn, that overgret homlineſſe engendreth diſpreiſing, ſo fareth it by to gret humilitee or mekeneſſe.

Than began dame Prudence to make ſemblaunt of wrathe, and ſayde: Certes, Sire, (ſauf your grace) I love youre honour and youre profite, as I do min owen, and ever have don; ye, ne non other, ſeyn never the contrary: and if I had ſayde, that ye ſhulde han purchaſed the pees and the reconciliation, I ne hadde not muchel miſtake me, ne ſayde amis. For the Wiſe man ſayth: The diſſention beginneth by another man, and the reconciling beginneth by thyſelf. And the Prophete ſaith: Flee ſhrewedneſſe and

and do goodneſſe; ſeke peeſ and folwe it, in as muchel as in thee is. Yet ſay I not, that ye ſhuln rather purſue to youre adverſaries for pees, than they ſhuln to you: for I know wel that ye ben ſo hard-herted, that ye wol do nothing for me; and Salomon ſayth: he that hath over hard an herte, atte laſte he ſhal miſhappe and miſtide.

Whan Melibee had herd dame Prudence make ſemblaunt of wrath, he ſayde in this wiſe. Dame, I pray you that ye be not diſpleſed of thinges that I ſay, for I knowe wel that I am angry and wroth, and that is no wonder; and they that ben wroth, woten not wel what they don, ne what they ſayn. Therfore the Prophete ſayth, that troubled eyen han no clere ſighte. But ſayth and conſeilleth me as you liketh, for I am redy to do right as ye wol deſire. And if ye repreve me of my folie, I am the more holden to love you and to preiſe you. For Salomon ſaith, that he that repreveth him that doth folie, he ſhal find greter grace, than he that deceiveth him by ſwete wordes.

Than ſayde Dame Prudence; I make no ſemblaunt of wrath ne of anger, but for youre grete profite. For Salomon ſaith: he is more

worth, that repreveth or chideth a fool for his folie, ſhewing him ſemblaunt of wrath, than he that ſupporteth him and preiſeth him in his miſdoing, and laugheth at his folie. And this ſame Salomon ſaith afterward, that by the ſorweful viſage of a man, that is to ſayn, by the ſory and hevy countenance of a man, the fool correcteth and amendeth himſelf.

Than ſaid Melibee; I ſhal not conne anſwere unto ſo many faire reſons as ye putten to me and ſhewen: ſayth ſhortly youre will and youre conſeil, and I am al redy to performe and fulfille it.

Than Dame Prudence diſcovered all hire will unto him and ſaide: I conſeille you, quod ſhe, above alle thinges that ye make pees betwene God and you, and be reconciled unto him and to his grace, for as I have ſayde you herebeforen, God hath ſuffered you to have this tribulation and diſeſe for youre ſinnes; and if ye do as I ſay you, God wol ſende youre adverſaries unto you, and make hem falle at youre feet, redy to do youre will and youre commaundements. For Salomon ſayth; whan the condition of man is pleſaunt and liking to God, he chaungeth the hertes of the mannes adverſaries,

ſaries, and conſtreineth hem to beſechen him of pees and of grace. And I pray you let me ſpeke with your adverſaries in privee place, for they ſhuln not knowe that it be of youre will or youre aſſent; and than, whan I knowe hir will and hir entente, I may conſeille you the more ſeurely.

Dame, quod Melibeus, doth youre will and youre liking, for I putte me holly in youre diſpoſition and ordinaunce.

Than Dame Prudence, when ſhe ſey the good will of hire huſbond, delibered unto hire, and toke avis in hire ſelf, thinking how ſhe might bring this nede unto goode ende. And whan ſhe ſey hire time, ſhe ſent for thiſe adverſaries to come unto hire in to a privee place, and ſhewed wiſely unto hem the grete goodes that comen of pees, and the grete harmes and perils that ben in werre; and ſaide to hem in a goodly manere, how that hem oughte have gret repentaunce of the injuries and wronges, that they hadden don to Melibeus hire lord, and unto hire and to hire doughter.

And whan they herden the goodly wordes of Dame Prudence, they weren ſo ſurpriſed and raviſhed, and hadden ſo gret joye of hire, that

wonder was to telle. A, lady, quod they, ye have ſhewed unto us the bleſſing of ſweteneſſe, after the ſaying of David the Prophete; for the reconciling, which we be not worthy to have in no manere, but we oughten requeren it with grete contrition and humilitee, ye of youre grete goodneſſe have preſented unto us. Now ſee we wel, that the ſcience and conning of Salomon is ful trewe; for he ſaith, that ſwete wordes multiplien and encreſen frendes, and maken ſhrewes to be debonaire and meke.

Certes, quod they, we putten oure dede, and all oure matere and cauſe, al holly in youre good will, and ben redy to obeye unto the ſpeche and commaundement of my lord Melibeus. And therfore, dere and benigne lady, we praye you and beſeche you as mekely as we conne and moun, that it like unto youre grete goodneſſe to fulfille in dede youre goodly wordes. For we conſideren and knowelechen, that we han offended and greved my lord Melibeus out of meſure, ſo fer forth, that we ben not of power to maken him amendes; and therfore we oblige and binde us and oure frendes, for to do all his will and his commaundements: but peraventure he hath ſwiche hevineſſe and ſwiche wrath to

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us ward, becauſe of oure offence, that he wol enjoynen us ſwiche a peine, as we moun not bere ne ſuſteine; and therfore, noble ladie, we beſeche to youre womanly pittee to take ſwiche aviſement in this nede, that we, ne oure frendes, ben not diſherited and deſtroied, thurgh oure folie.

Certes, quod Prudence, it is an hard thing and right perilous, that a man putte him all outrely in the arbitration and jugement, and in the might and power of his enemie: for Salomon ſayth: leveth me, and yeveth credence to that that I ſhall ſay: to thy ſone, to thy wif, to thy frend, ne to thy brother, ne yeve thou never might ne maiſtrie over thy body, while thou liveſt. Now, ſith he defendeth that a man ſhulde not yeve to his brother, ne to his frend, the might of his body, by a ſtrenger reſon he defendeth and forbedeth a man to yeve himſelf to his enemy. And natheles, I conſeille you that ye miſtruſte not my lord: for I wot wel and know verily, that he is debonaire and meke, large, curteis, and nothing deſirous ne coveitous of good ne richeſſe: for ther is nothing in this world that he deſireth, ſave only worſhipe and honour. Forthermore I know wel,

and am right ſure, that he ſhal nothing do in this nede withouten my conſeil; and I ſhal ſo werken in this cas, that by the grace of oure Lord God ye ſhuln be reconciled unto us.

Than ſaiden they with o vois; worſhipful lady, we putten us and oure goodes al fully in youre will and diſpoſition, and ben redy to come, what day that it like unto youre nobleſſe to limite us or aſſigne us, for to make oure obligation and bond, as ſtrong as it liketh unto youre goodneſſe, that we moun fulfille the will of you and of my lord Melibee.

Whan Dame Prudence had herd the anſwer of thiſe men, ſhe bad hem go agein prively, and ſhe retourned to hire lord Melibee, and told him how ſhe fond his adverſaries ful repentaunt, knowleching ful lowly hir ſinnes and treſpas, and how they weren redy to ſuffren all peine, requering and preying him of mercy and pitee.

Than ſaide Melibee; he is wel worthy to have pardon and foryeveneſſe of his ſinne, that excuſeth not his ſinne, but knowlecheth, and repenteth him, axing indulgence. For Senek ſaith; ther is the remiſſion and foryeveneſſe, wher as the confeſſion is; for confeſſion is neighebour to innocence. And therefore I aſ-

ſente

ſente and conferme me to have pees, but it is good that we do nought withouten the aſſent and will of oure frendes.

Than was Prudence right glad and joyeful, and ſaide; certes, ſire, ye han wel and goodly anſwered: for right as by the conſeil, aſſent, and helpe of your frendes, ye han be ſtired to venge you and make werre: right ſo withouten hir conſeil ſhul ye not accord you, ne have pees with youre adverſaries. For the lawe ſaith: ther is nothing ſo good by way of kinde, as a thing to be unbounde by him that it was ybounde.

And than Dame Prudence, withouten delay or tarying, ſent anon hire meſſageres for hir kin and for hir olde frendes, which that were trewe and wiſe: and told hem by ordre, in the preſence of Meſibee, all the matere, as it is above expreſſed and declared; and preied hem that they wold yeve hir avis and conſeil, what were beſt to do in this nede. And whan Melibeus frendes hadden taken hir avis and deliberation of the foreſaid matere, and hadden examined it by gret beſineſſe and gret diligence, they yaven ful conſeil for to have pees and reſte,

and that Melibee ſhulde receive with good herte his adverſaries to foryeveneſſe and mercy.

And whan dame Prudence had herd the aſſent of hire lord Melibee, and the conſeil of his frendes, accord with hire will and hire entention, ſhe was wonder glad in hire herte, and ſayde: ther is an olde Proverbe, quod ſhe, ſayth, that the goodneſſe that thou maiſt do this day, do it, and abide not, ne delay it not til to morwe: and therfore I conſeille, that ye ſende youre meſſageres, ſwiche as ben diſcrete and wiſe, unto youre adverſaries, telling hem on youre behalf, that if they wol trete of pees and of accord, that they ſhape hem, withouten delay or tarying, to come unto us. Which thing parfourmed was indede. And whan thiſe treſpaſours and repenting folk of hir folies, that is to ſayn, the adverſaries of Melibee, hadden herd what thiſe meſſageres ſayden unto hem, they weren right glade and joyeful, and anſwerden ful mekely and benignely, yelding graces and thankinges to hir lord Melibee, and to all his compagnie: and ſhopen hem withouten delay to go with the meſſageres, and obeye to the commaundement of hir lord Melibee.

And

And right anon they token hir way to the court of Melibee, and token with hem ſom of hir trewe frendes, to make feith for hem, and for to ben hir borwes. And whan they were comen to the preſence of Melibee, he ſaide hem thiſe wordes: it ſtant thus, quod Melibee, and ſoth it is, that ye cauſeles, and withouten ſkill and reſon, han don grete injuries and wronges to me, and to my wif Prudence, and to my doughter alſo, for ye han entred into myn hous by violence, and have don ſwiche outrage, that alle men knowen wel that ye han deſerved the deth: and therfore wol I know and wete of you, whether ye wol putte the puniſhing and chaſtiſing, and the vengeaunce of this outrage, in the will of me and of my wif, or ye wol not.

Than the wiſeſt of hem three anſwered for hem alle, and ſaide. Sire, quod he, we knowen wel, that we ben unworthy to come to the court of ſo gret a lord and ſo worthy as ye ben, for we han ſo gretly miſtaken us, and han offended and agilte in ſwiche wiſe agein youre high lordſhipe, that trewely we han deſerved the deth; but yet for the grete goodneſſe and debonairetee, that all the world witneſſeth of youre perſone, we ſubmitten us to the excellence and benignitee

of

of youre gracious lordſhipe, and ben redy to obeye to alle youre comandements, beſeching you, that of youre merciable pitee ye wol conſidere oure grete repentance and lowe ſubmiſſion, and graunte us foryeveneſſe of oure outragious treſpas and offence: for wel we knowen, that youre liberal grace and mercie ſtretchen hem forther into goodneſſe, than don oure outragious giltes and treſpas into wickedneſſe; al be it that curſedly and dampnably we han agilte again youre highe lordſhipe.

Than Melibee toke hem up fro the ground ful benignely, and received hir obligations, and hir bondes, by hir othes upon hir plegges and borwes, and aſſigned hem a certain day to retourne unto his court for to receive and accept ſentence and jugement, that Melibee wolde commande to be don on hem, by the cauſes aforeſaid; which thinges ordeined, every man retourned to his hous.

And whan that dame Prudence ſaw hire time, ſhe freined and axed hire lord Melibee, what vengeance he thoughte to taken of his adverſaries.

To which Melibee anſwerd, and ſaide: certes, quod he, I thinke and purpoſe me fully to diſherite

diſherite hem of all that ever they han, and for to putte hem in exile for ever.

Certes, quod Dame Prudence, this were a cruel ſentence, and muchel agein reſon. For ye ben riche ynough, and han no nede of other mennes good; and ye might lightly in this wiſe gete you a coveitous name, which is a vicious thing, and oughte to ben eſchewed of every good man: for after the ſawe of the Apoſtle, coveitiſe is rote of alle harmes. And therfore it were better for you to leſe muchel good of your owen, than for to take of hir good in this manere. For better it is to leſe good with worſhip, than to winne good with vilanie and ſhame. And every man oughte to do his diligence and his beſineſſe, to gete him a good name. And yet ſhal he not only beſie him in keping his good name, but he ſhal alſo enforcen him alway to do ſom thing, by which he may renovelle his good name: for it is written, that the olde good los, or good name, of a man is ſone gon and paſſed, whan it is not newed. And as touching that ye ſayn, that ye wol exile your adverſaries, that thinketh me muchel agein reſon, and out of meſure, conſidered the power that they han yeven you upon

upon hemſelf. And it is written, that he is worthy to leſe his privilege, that miſuſeth the might and the power that is yeven him. And I ſette cas, ye might enjoine hem that peine by right and by lawe, (which I trowe ye mowe not do) I ſay, ye might not putte it to execution peraventure, and than it were like to retourne to the werre, as it was beforn. And therfore if ye wol that men do you obeiſaunce, ye muſt deme more curteiſly, that is to ſayn, ye muſt yeve more eſie ſentences and jugements. For it is written: he that moſt curteiſly commandeth, to him men moſt obeyen. And therfore I pray you, that in this neceſſitee and in this nede ye caſte you to overcome youre herte. For Senek ſayth, that he that overcometh his herte, overcometh twies. And Tullius ſaith: ther is nothing ſo commendable in a gret lord, as whan he is debonaire and meke, and appeſeth him lightly. And I pray you, that ye wol now forbere to do vengeaunce, in ſwiche a manere, that your good name may be kept and conſerved, and that men mown have cauſe and matere to preiſe you of pitee and of mercy; and that ye have no cauſe to repente you of thing that ye don. For Seneke ſaieth: he overcometh

cometh in an evil manere, that repenteth him of his victorie. Wherfore I pray you let mercy be in youre herte, to the effect and entente, that God almighty have mercy upon you in his laſt jugement: for ſeint James ſaith in his Epiſtle: jugement withoute mercy ſhal be do to him, that hath no mercy of another wight.

Whan Melibee had heard the grete ſkilles and reſons of dame Prudence, and hire wiſe informations and techinges, his herte gan encline to the will of his wif, conſidering hire trewe entente, enforced him anon and aſſented fully to werken after hire conſeil, and thanked God, of whom procedeth all goodneſſe and all vertue, that him ſent a wif of ſo gret diſcretion. And whan the day came that his adverſaries ſhulde appere in his preſence, he ſpake to hem ful goodly, and ſaide in this wiſe. Al be it ſo, that of youre pride and high preſumption and folie, and of youre negligence and unconning, ye have miſborne you, and treſpaſed unto me, yet for as muchel as I ſee and behold youre grete humilitee, and that ye ben ſory and repentant of youre giltes, it conſtreineth me to do you grace and mercy: wherfore I receive you into my grace, and foryeve you outrely alle the offences,

injuries,

injuries, and wronges, that ye have don agein me and mine, to this effect and to this ende, that God of his endeles mercie wol at the time of oure dying foryeve us oure giltes, that we han treſpaſed to him in this wretched world: for douteles, if we be ſory and repentant of the ſinnes and giltes, which we han treſpaſed in the ſight of oure Lord God, he is ſo free and ſo merciable, that he wol foryeven us oure giltes, and bringen us to the bliſſe that never hath ende. *Amen.*

THE END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.